



**POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-2020**

CHILDREN'S SERVICES CHARTER

Children and families in Powys can expect us to achieve:

- **INCREASED WELL-BEING**
(providing high quality support to families and children)
- **EXCELLENT PROTECTION**
(keeping children and young people as safe as possible)
- **BEST PRACTICE**
(carrying out professional responsibilities to high standards)
- **FIRST-CLASS PERFORMANCE**
(reaching and exceeding improvement targets)

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Purpose

This document sets out the Powys Children's Services Improvement Plan for 2017-2020. We anticipate that the plan will continue to be developed based on feedback from staff, children and young people, parents and carers, external review, audit and challenge. The overall strategic plan is supported by several service development plans and strategies for priority areas (for example, the Looked After Children Strategy). It will form the basis for a three-year programme of change. Immediate and longer-term actions are described within the plan, the former in greater detail because this is where changes are needed most urgently and because more time is needed to be sure about what needs to be done if we are to deliver sustainable and larger-scale reform. Delivering all the changes promptly and effectively will mean we can provide the people of Powys, at the earliest possible time, with realistic reassurance that children are being safeguarded effectively and that children's services are fulfilling all their statutory responsibilities to the highest possible standard.

Statutory Responsibilities

Children and young people in our communities who need care and support under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 are especially vulnerable and entitled to effective help. The Act gives every Local authority responsibility for making sure that children in need of care and support receive the right help at the right time, to improve their well-being and protect them from harm. This means:

- identifying and assessing children who need care and support as early as possible;
- helping them to use the strengths in their families and resources in their communities to provide help and support; and
- intervening at a time which prevents needs becoming critical.

In addition, as Corporate Parents of children who are looked after, it is the Council's responsibility to help keep them safe, to make sure that their experiences in care are positive, and to improve the access they have to opportunities for them to succeed in life, including after care support.

In carrying out these complex and high-profile tasks, the Local authority must establish and show how it is going to improve the general well-being of children and young people who need care and support, for whatever reason. Help will be made available at all stages of any child's 'care journey', with clear statements about how children and their families will be supported to stay together whenever it is safe to do so and, as a result, how the Local authority will minimise the need for children to become looked after. The Local authority is obliged to describe the types of care and the range of placements it wants to provide and commission for Looked After Children. The overall strategy for children's services should identify how the needs of children, young people and their families will be met within the resources available to the Local authority for a specific period, both short-term and long-term, to ensure that services are sustainable and consistent. All these elements contribute to the delivery of an integrated and effective pattern of services to children young people and their families.

Context

An inspection in July 2017 by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales raised serious concerns about leadership, management and practice in Powys Children's Services. The grounds for these concerns included:

- failings in corporate leadership;
- lack of stability in management arrangements;
- staffing capacity in front-line Children's Services teams; and
- the quality of professional practice.

The Inspectorate concluded that, as a consequence, children were being placed at risk.

The Council quickly acknowledged the need for urgent and sustained improvement. Extensive activity has taken place across the Local authority, since the inspection to secure compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards. Examples of the work are outlined in the plan itself. Through a rigorous process of self-assessment and by listening to advice from a range of experts in producing improvement in children's services which are experiencing severe difficulties, Powys has developed a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development, which has been further informed by the helpful recommendations made by the Inspectors. There is a commitment at all levels of the organisation to continuing improvement so that children and families receive the help and support they need. The arrangements for accountability set out later in this plan demonstrate that, within the Council, the Leader, Cabinet members, the Chief Executive, the corporate management team, staff and partners accept a personal and collective responsibility for ensuring that this plan is delivered and good outcomes achieved.

This is the context in which Powys has provided an improvement plan which will be effective in delivering the aims set out below.

Key Improvement Aims

A set of key aims and principles have been developed, as set out below and defined further in Appendix 1. It provides a checklist for the council and key partners to use as a means of holding up a mirror to the current strategy and deciding if it is improving outcomes for children and families. By describing “What does good look like?”, it will provide one of the tools that can help us to engage in effective scrutiny, peer review and operational improvement. The major emphasis is on helping the Local authority, our partners, inspectors, reviewers and auditors to reassure ourselves that the plan of improvement set out is having a timely and significant influence on the well-being of children and young people in Powys.

KEY AIMS

- 1. To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to be looked after, by focusing on services** which provide timely help, build on family’s strengths and prevent greater problems arising.
- 2. To manage risk confidently and effectively when providing support to families where children and young people need to be safeguarded or they are judged to be on the ‘edge of care’** by making sure that their needs are accurately assessed and met effectively, with positive outcomes for them. This includes supporting families to avoid children becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks so that children become looked after by the council only where this is clearly in their best interests.
- 3. To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements for children who are looked after** to meet the diverse range of their needs and circumstances.
- 4. To give children and young people clearly planned journeys through care and into adulthood** which remain focused on achieving care and support plans, prevent drift, enable them to be reunited with family and friends where possible, have stable placements and exit the care system with good prospects for improved life chances.

These aims are underpinned by the following principles:

- a. The responsibility for meeting the needs of children and young people looked after or at risk of becoming looked after rests across all services for children, including statutory and independent providers.
- b. Most children are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families.
- c. Preventative services and early intervention to support children in need and their families should be provided in ways that give them every chance to stay together.
- d. Where children cannot be supported within their immediate family, there will be help available for assisting them to make private arrangements within their wider family and friendship networks and, where necessary, to make these arrangements permanent.
- e. Formal kinship fostering arrangements will be explored as the preferred alternative arrangement where it is necessary for the Local authority to share parental responsibility or intervene in managing risk and protecting children.
- f. Multi-agency arrangements to assessing and managing risk to vulnerable children and young people need to be robust.
- g. We have a duty to ensure that intensive family support is available on a multi-agency basis for families where children or young people are on the edge of care.
- h. Where a child's needs cannot be adequately met through the arrangements already described, the majority will have their needs met best in a substitute family.
- i. Residential care placements will be made only where the complexity of a child or young person's needs mean they are unable to live within a family setting or where a young person is subject to a Court Ordered Secure Remand.
- j. Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.
- k. Placement requests should be defined in terms of the child/young person's needs. It is the role of the Local authority to consider the most appropriate type of placement to meet these needs, with due regard given to the available resources.

- l. All Looked After Children of statutory school age should receive appropriate education provision regardless of their placement and ability to access school. Providing appropriate support to enable engagement in education is just as important as finding suitable care placements for Looked After Children.
- m. Placements should support a positive transition to independence, adulthood, education, employment, and training and, where applicable, resettlement back into the community from custodial settings.

Action taken so far

In July 2017, CSSIW inspected the Local authority's services for children in respect of Information, Advice and Assistance; they also looked at services to children looked after and care leavers and found them to be inadequate. The regulatory findings and 29 recommendations are addressed in this improvement plan.

Since developing an initial escalation plan earlier this year in relation to Children's Services, Powys County Council and partners have acted in priority areas also highlighted by CSSIW in its inspection report. The work has focused on ten key areas: initial decision-making once a referral has been made; professional practice; organisational development; quality assurance processes; governance arrangements; external learning; reporting mechanisms; financial management; staffing and strategy formulation.

Action has taken place in all these areas. For example, we have recruited additional skilled and experienced social workers, fifteen of them through an agency. Twenty one new staff have been recruited in children's services since July eleven of which are substantive appointments. There are six more social workers employed directly by the Council. Now that we have a full complement of operational managers in Children's Services, it has been possible to hold a series of meetings with all the staff to provide opportunities for exchanging ideas about how best to improve professional practice and support to children and families. Staff have expressed real enthusiasm for helping to co-produce and deliver the changes needed.

A threshold document has been developed via the Regional Safeguarding Board and launched in Powys, providing 200 staff in children's services and other agencies with an important tool for making decisions about which screening referrals and organising assessments. The contact centre, Powys People Direct, is now fully staffed. Our supervision policy has been updated and monitoring arrangements are being put in place. Legal Tracking, Review and Planning (weekly) meetings are well established to help manage care proceedings. The Independent Reviewing Officer team has additional recruits. A new training plan focuses on embedding in practice the principles and practice of the Social Services and Well-being Act; it has been approved by Social Care Wales. Scrutiny of assessment recording material demonstrates a greater emphasis on the voice of the child.

A Quality Assurance Performance Framework (including auditing tool) has been drafted and there is an agreed proposal for enhancing the auditing function in children's services. Performance monitoring and reporting have been priorities for development. A new dashboard is being introduced which will provide a range of audiences with robust and timely evidence. Early use has demonstrated how unreliable some data has been and how far we still must go in achieving better information. However, in important areas where we can be confident that indicators are being recorded and calculated correctly, such as completion of assessments in time and allocation of priority cases, it is possible to see performance indicators moving in the right direction. This has been achieved when the overall volume of work has increased considerably because there are far more children in the care of the Local authority. A deep dive practice audit has been undertaken in respect of child protection registrations. All staff are now using the Welsh Community Care Information System.

We have strengthened governance arrangements including the introduction of an independent Improvement Board. An Improvement Team provided by the Welsh Local Government Association is helping the Council to develop its executive and scrutiny arrangements so that they provide better leadership and oversight of Children's Services. The full Council has debated the inspection report. It made a commitment to supporting Children's Services in its work and to helping the new portfolio holder to make the improvements required. New scrutiny arrangements are in place, including a Children's Services Lead. The Corporate Parenting Board has been revived, with high attendance from Cabinet Members and partner agencies. We have filled senior leadership posts at both Director and Head of Service level with very experienced and highly regarded managers. We have engaged the council's whole extended leadership team in this priority work and increased the support available from other areas such as legal services, HR and IT. 'Improving Social Care' item is now a standing item on the weekly Corporate Management Team, chaired by the Chief Executive; a specific focus on Children's Services has now been added. Additional finance has been made available to Children's Services while costed proposals for improvement are being developed. An improvement programme team has been established to help develop the plan and to help implementation.

Powys has made progress in improving arrangements to protect children since the inspection was undertaken. Senior and frontline staffing arrangements are now more secure. While progress has been slow in some areas, improvement has been made in compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards. Powys has developed a better understanding of its strengths and areas for development. There is commitment at all levels to continuing improvement so that children and families get the best possible help and care.

How the Improvement Plan will be developed

Much remains to be done in all the priority areas. The improvement Plan will continue to evolve over the course of the year and beyond, based on feedback from staff, children and young people, parents and carers, external review, audit and challenge. Achieving the necessary improvements is dependent on all agencies concerned with protecting and improving outcomes for children and young people working together. Therefore, key elements within this plan involve a multi-agency approach. The Children and Young People Partnership has been asked to contribute to the plan and to play a key role in further development and implementation. It will focus on ensuring that:

- the leadership, culture, values and behaviour of the partnership deliver good outcomes for children and young people;
- best practice is consistent in all areas of frontline services;
- resources support good practice and improved outcomes for children and young people; and
- self-knowledge, informed by listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people, drives improvements.

We must build on the work done to date by providing clear direction, creating the conditions in which all children and young people will be able to thrive. Our improvement plan puts children and young people at the heart of everything we do. Working with our partners, we will listen to the voice of the child to improve outcomes for the county's children. During our improvement journey, we will have an open and positive dialogue with children and young people, those who care for them, our partners and our frontline staff to make the improvements needed and ensure a sustainable journey of improvement. The plan focuses on ensuring that we have the right conditions to allow our staff to do their very best for children in Powys. Working together, we can improve the lives of our children and young people.

Understanding where we are now

Powys Profile

Powys County Council is the unitary authority for Powys and covers a quarter of the area of Wales. It is one of the largest, yet least populated counties in England and Wales. Located in central Wales along the Borders area with England, it borders 13 other authorities. Powys covers 5,197 square kilometres. Its population of approximately 132,000 is just 4.4% of the Welsh total.

Powys is a predominantly rural county with some small and medium-sized towns, but no large settlements or cities. There is only one town with a population over 10,000; there are 15 other main settlements and hundreds of small villages and hamlets.

There are approximately 22,000 children and young people under the age of 18 living in Powys. It has a low proportion of young adults and a high proportion of older working and retired adults compared with the UK as a whole. The average age of the population in 2002 was 43 years, which compared with 40 in Wales and 39 in England and Wales.

The 2001 Census shows that 25,516 people (21.1% of the county's population over three years old) can speak, read and write Welsh and that 38.1% of the 3-15 age group are Welsh speakers. In Powys, Welsh speakers are not evenly distributed within the various communities. There is a bigger density in the north than in the east.

The total workforce in the county numbers approximately 73,000. The county's main primary industries are agriculture and forestry, which employ 11% of the workforce. The public sector is the only large employer with 26% of the workforce employed mainly in local government, schools and health services. The last ten years have seen most large manufacturing employers exit. Unemployment rates are low compared to the rest of Wales. However, average incomes are low, with part-time workers forming 27% of the workforce. 16% of Powys households are in fuel poverty. The proportion of pupils in compulsory education entitled to free school meals is 12%, which compares with 18.9% nationally.

For most children and young people, Powys is a good place to grow up. Most children and young people are safe, well educated, experience good health and have good leisure and employment opportunities. However, there are groups of children and young people who experience poorer outcomes, compounded in some cases by the challenges of sparsity and isolation. There is a vulnerability profile which demonstrates the current level of need in Powys from targeted to specialist services.

How will we get where we need to be?

Priorities for Improvement and Development

The Improvement Plan identifies four key priority areas, each sponsored by a member of the Improvement Partnership Board. These are:

- Leadership Governance and Partnership;
- Case Management /Strategy and Models of Care;
- Workforce; and
- Practice Quality and Assurance.

Key Principles

There are key principles underpinning the improvement plan:

Upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and professional values – we will respect the inherent dignity and worth of all people, promote social justice, act with integrity and ensure that our children's rights are upheld.

Multi-agency approach - from frontline delivery to strategic decision making, there is a need to ensure that vulnerable children, young people and families receive co-ordinated and effective support. This is not only about the different agencies involved in a child and family's life working effectively together but it is also about enabling supportive challenge between agencies when this does not happen.

Learning from children and young people - we will listen to the experiences of children, young people and families, hearing what they are telling us and responding to this in our improvement work.

Learning from others - there is much that can be learned from other authorities that will support us to improve services. We will work collaboratively to identify offers of support and challenge that can help us innovate and sustain improvements to services.

Early help - identifying needs early and providing targeted support is the best way to achieve good outcomes for children but also to prevent the escalation of issues that leads to statutory interventions. This prevention and early help approach will be key to developing more effective and efficient services to protect and safeguard children.

Workforce - throughout the improvement process, we must ensure that services that are working well, valued and continue to develop. Our workforce is key to delivering high quality services and need to be supported in their determination to improve practice.

Improved outcomes - the range of activity and actions described within the improvement plan must deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families. The way we will measure success is when we are able to demonstrate that outcomes are improving.

Providing evidence of improvement - There are several ways in which we will assure the public, members of the Improvement Board and other accountability structures that we are making a difference and improving the services that children and young people access. They include:

- a Performance Dashboard - a collection of key indicators that will enable the Improvement Board, PLOG & Council Management Team to measure progress against targets set; and
- the Quality Assurance Framework - this framework will detail ways in which the Improvement Board will ensure that activity and actions delivered through the Improvement Plan are having the positive impact on the quality of practice and the experience of children and young people.

How will we know that we have achieved good outcomes for children and families?

Leadership, Governance and Partnership - Elected members, senior leaders, managers and frontline practitioners will have a shared understanding of what good looks like (as set out in Appendix 1) and this will be informed by evidence that is available locally, regionally and nationally and by what children, young people and families are telling us about their experience..

Strategy and Models of Care - Integrated working will ensure that resources, expertise and skills from across a range of partners can achieve the best possible outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

Workforce - Practitioners will have the skills, knowledge and capacity needed to provide effective and timely support to children, young people and families.

Practice and Quality Assurance - The way we work with and support families will be coherent and effective. Regular supervision will allow appropriate support and challenge and workloads will be manageable.

Reporting Framework

The Improvement Board will be the key vehicle for scrutiny and challenge, together with the Council's own performance management and scrutiny functions. The PLOG and Corporate Management Team will receive regular updates on outcomes for children and progress as indicated by performance information and reports on audit findings. The Improvement Board will also receive a Data Dashboard and detailed Key Performance Indicators report at each meeting along with a programme and performance report to track progress. There is a list of all the Key Performance Indicators being used to measure progress along with expected performance for a 'good' Local authority.

Quality Assurance

A range of quality assurance activity is planned. The Quality Assurance Framework covers this in detail. Quality assurance activity that will be carried out includes:

- Surveys of children and young people, parents' and carers'
- Focus groups of service users
- Feedback via *Mind of My Own* or other digital App.
- Quantitative Audits
- Qualitative Audits of case files
- Peer audits
- External audits
- Case mapping with partners

Governance and Leadership

The Powys County Council Improvement Board has been established under the powers contained in the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act, after Powys County Council had been given a warning letter by the Welsh Government. The Minister for Social Services has determined that the Board will be chaired by Jack Straw (former Local authority Chief Executive) and its membership will be independent of the Council. It includes Phil Hodgson (former Director of Social Services, Geoff Burrows (former Portfolio Holder in another Local authority) and a representative from the Children's Commissioner. The Board can comprise up to six members as other inputs are required. The Board is commissioned and contracted by the Welsh Local Government Association. The Council is establishing an Improvement Partnership chaired by the Council Leaders which will work closely with the Improvement Board. Tasks may flow from the Board to the Partnership and issues may be escalated from the Partnership to the Board for resolution.

The Board has the dual role of holding the Council accountable for improvement and seeking to help deliver improvement in both Social Services and the Council as a whole. The Board membership is set out above but it will be supplemented by the attendance of and active participation by the:

- Leader of the Council
- Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
- Chief Executive
- Statutory Director of Social Services
- Director of Education
- Head of Children's Services

plus any other officers or partners who are needed to assist with any given item.

The Board will convene at least once a month for approximately 3 days. This will comprise the following activities as a minimum,

- 1-to-1 meetings with key staff and politicians;
- Formal Board Meeting; and
- Engagement activity with staff at all levels.

The Improvement Board will:

- ensure production of a Children's Social Services Improvement Plan as directed by the Minister and in line with CSSIW expectations;
- monitor, scrutinise and challenge to ensure the timely delivery of actions identified in the Improvement Plan;
- hold the Council to account for delivering the broad spectrum of required improvement and escalate in the event of non-compliance;

- engage with staff at all levels to facilitate delivery of improvement and raise awareness of this work;
- keep informed WLGA, WG and CSSIW about progress; and
- ensure that the Council produces and delivers a Corporate Improvement Plan in line with CSSIW expectations and the analysis undertaken by the Board.

The strategic partnership boards responsible for safeguarding children and young people in Powys are the Powys Local Operational Group (PLOG), the Regional Partnership Board (RPB), the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) and the Corporate Parenting Group (CPG). A protocol is being developed which clarifies:

- the roles, responsibilities and governance arrangements for each including their specific roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and young people;
- how they work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of people living in Powys; and governance, accountability and coordination arrangements

The **Regional Safeguarding Board** is chaired by the Regional Chair, meeting quarterly and working in partnership with each PLOG board to ensure that where children are harmed, or at risk of harm, all agencies actively cooperate to safeguard them and promote their welfare. The PLOG is supported by sub-groups that progress separate work streams of the PLOG Business plan.

The Regional Partnership Board and its supporting **Children and Young People's Partnership** promote collaborative working and decision-making that improves health and social care outcomes for children and young people. It has been established under Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being Act to drive the integration of health and social services; to plan and ensure the delivery of integrated, innovative care and support services to best meet the needs of people in response to the population assessment. Through joint commissioning, the Board works to secure sustainable, appropriately integrated health, social care and education, delivered to children and young people, from pre-birth up to transition to adulthood, with high quality delivery and outcomes.

Powys County Council's **Corporate Parenting Group** (CPG) considers matters concerning the Council's role as a Corporate Parent to children and young people Looked After and those receiving Aftercare services, in particular regarding improvements to health, education, employment, training and housing outcomes for children and young people Looked After.

Each group will be expected to provide positive and visible leadership that ensures clarity of priorities and expectations, embedded within a 'can do' approach. Leadership will be provided at many different levels but always with a consistency of message and approach.

Risks/ Issues

It is essential to identify, analyse and prioritise risks as part of the improvement process to ensure that these risks are managed effectively. There are significant risks to the Improvement Plan, including the Council's ability to deliver consistent good practice with a stable workforce. A programme risk register will be maintained by the Programme Manager and reported to the Improvement Board and, where appropriate, risks will be escalated to the relevant agency's corporate risk registers.

Communications Plan

The success of the Improvement Plan in Powys relies on communication and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

A number of methods for communicating improvement progress will continue to be used to inform stakeholders. Such as:

- Regular updates to Members, Council Management Team and Regional Partnership Board
- Monthly Children's Services staff newsletter, Children and Young People Matter
- Child Protection Training Fora for multi-agency practitioners
- Intranet and online updates of progress
- Updates to Children's and Young People's Partnership Board

Full activity is outlined in the Improvement Plan Communication Plan including engagement with staff and all other stakeholders.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Priority Improvement Area A – Leadership, Governance and Partnership Partnership Improvement Board Sponsor - Chief Executive

Theme A: Leadership Governance and Partnerships

CSSIW analysis

The chief executive must immediately provide strong corporate support for Children's Services to ensure service improvements are prioritised and the pace of improvement accelerated and sustained.

The council leader and the portfolio member must provide strong political support to Children's Services and take the necessary steps to put in place well informed and effective scrutiny to make sure service improvements are made quickly, effectively and are sustainable.

Success criteria

Leadership, management and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance and together establish an effective strategy for the delivery of good quality services and outcomes for people. Meeting people's needs for quality services is a clear focus for councillors, managers and staff. Services are well-led, direction is clear, and the leadership of change is strong. Roles and responsibilities throughout the organisation are clear. The authority works with partners to deliver help, care and support for people and fulfils its corporate parenting responsibilities. Involvement of local people is effective. Leaders, managers and elected members have sufficient knowledge and understanding of practice and performance to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Immediate The chief executive must immediately provide strong corporate support for Children's Services to ensure service improvements are prioritised and the pace of improvement accelerated and sustained.	A1	Establish Improvement Board to provide additional support, to develop and implement the Improvement Plan	Recommendation 5	Chief Executive	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Board established and meeting regularly.
	A2	Establish weekly meetings across all Directorates to ensure corporate support is being made available in a timely manner	Recommendation 5	Chief Executive	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational Group established and meeting weekly to ensure corporate support is available as required. Terms of Reference for Operational Group agreed. Action log in place. Risk and Issues register established.
	A3	Identify areas that require investment to support best practice and safeguard children, and the Council supports the Service to deliver these	Recommendation 5	Head of Children's Services Head of Children's Services	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational Group working to clarify priority areas requiring immediate investment.
Immediate The council leader and the portfolio member must provide strong political support to Children's Services and take the necessary steps to put in place well informed and effective scrutiny to make sure service improvements are made quickly,	A4	Weekly meetings to be held with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder.	Recommendation 6	Chief Executive	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly meetings established and taking place every Monday morning involving Leader, portfolio holders for Adult and Children Services, CEO, Director of Social Services and Heads of

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
effectively and are sustainable.						Adult and Children's Services.
	A5	Ensure corporate oversight and support for the corporate parenting role are in place.	Recommendation 6	Chief Executive	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members Briefing Session on Children Safeguarding held. 43 members in attendance. Induction Programme developed for all Elected Members all Senior Staff. Further training sessions in the North and South of the County offered to all Councillors. "If this were my child", a councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers circulated to all elected members. Councillors' Dashboard with live key performance data developed and made available. Corporate Parenting Board convened and invite extended to all cabinet members. Corporate Parenting Board chaired by Portfolio holder for Children Services. Dates for Corporate Parenting Board set bi-

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
						<p>monthly for 2018 (previously met quarterly).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference have been agreed. • Agreement from Corporate Parenting Board that further self- assessment be undertaken to inform the development of a revised corporate parenting work plan.
	A6	Regularly update Scrutiny Committee on progress being made.	Recommendation 6	Chief Executive	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Scrutiny met formally to consider the report and the current position of Children Services. • Presentation from Head of Service circulated to all Children Scrutiny members. • Improvement Plan shared with Scrutiny Committee.
	A7	Engage with workforce	Recommendation 6	Head of Children's Services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 rounds of Staff Roadshows undertaken across the County led by Portfolio holder, Chief Executive, Director of Social Services and Head of Children Services.

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 57 staff attended last round of roadshows held late October.
<p>Medium</p> <p>Effective multi-agency quality assurance systems and training arrangements should be established to ensure thresholds for assessments to statutory Children's Services are understood by staff and partners and are consistently applied; this should include the development of a multi-agency child protection decision making protocol.</p>	A8	Launch and implement Regional threshold document in Children's Services and with partner agencies	Recommendation 16	Head of Children's Services	Launch 2 nd October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	A9	Undertake multi-agency training needs analysis	Recommendation 16	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources	November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	A10	Publish a multi-agency training brochure	Recommendation 16	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources	April 2018	
	A11	Increase the number of multi-agency child protection fora from two programmes to three programmes	Recommendation 16	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	November 2017	
	A12	Establish multi-agency child protection decision-making protocol	Recommendation 16	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead		

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
<p>Medium There is a need for clear strategic direction supported by operational protocols to enable partners to have a clear understanding of the purpose, structure and decision making in Children's Services.</p>	A13	Develop a guide for partners around Children's Services to include threshold document, governance structures and personnel, key contacts and decision processes to be supported via Child Protection Fora.	Recommendation 17	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD / Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD	December 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is better understanding across partners about the strategic direction and operational protocols of Children's Services but this needs to be consolidated.
<p>Medium There should be an early consideration of the impact of the changes made because of the commissioned review and whether decisions made as part of the review should be revisited.</p>	A14	Review the Children's Services revised structure to ensure that decisions made allow for the delivery of high quality services that keep children safe. The review will need to consider the impact of removing a specific 16+ Team and whether these services can be protected and enhanced within the new structure.	Recommendation 18	Children's Services SMT	November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation as to whether the decisions made as part of the commissioned review enable the service to deliver high quality services to all children and young people or if alternative arrangements need to be established.
<p>Medium Elected members need to be clear about the vision for Children's Services and recognise this as a high-risk area for the council. To support this, members need training to understand the direction of</p>	A15	Children's Services to provide a briefing to Members Development Day that sets out the direction of services and the inherent risks in Children's Services.	Recommendation 19	Head of Children's Services	November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Members have a greater understanding of the inherent risks in Children's Services. • Children's Services are recognised as a high-risk area for the Council and receive full corporate

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
services and the particular risks inherent in Children's Services.						<p>support to ensure delivery of high quality services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members Briefing Session on Children Safeguarding - 43 members in attendance.
<p>Medium</p> <p>The chief executive must make arrangements to ensure all elected members have a clear understanding of, and are able to fulfil, their corporate parenting responsibilities.</p>	A16	To develop a Children's Services training module to be part of the member's induction process.	Recommendation 20	Head of Children's Services	November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet and all elected members have clear knowledge and understanding of their Corporate Parenting Responsibilities.
	A17	Information and performance data to be provided to Elected members to enable them to discharge their Corporate parenting responsibilities to be provided to all elected members.	Recommendation 20	Head of Children's Services	January 2018	
<p>Medium</p> <p>The Local authority needs to undertake further work in relation to implementing the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 so there is understanding at a corporate level in relation to the delivery of information, advice and assistance.</p>	A18	Cabinet Members to attend Corporate Parenting Group meetings as set out in the Terms of Reference.	Recommendation 21	Chief Executive	November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite extended to all Cabinet members to play an active role at Corporate Parenting Group to ensure the Council discharges its Corporate Parenting Responsibilities.
	A19	Provide an Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) briefing to Corporate Management Team and Members.	Recommendation 21	Chief Executive	November 2017	

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
	A20	Implement regular reporting under the Corporate Improvement Plan for delivery of IAA.	Recommendation 21	Chief Executive	November 2017	
	A21	Undertake a mapping and gapping exercise across the Council for all IAA functions	Recommendation 21	Director of Social Services	December 2017	
	A22	Develop community responses to building families resilience by working with the social values forum supported by PAVO.	Recommendation 21	Senior Manager CYPP	December 2017	
	A23	Reinstating In-Focus news briefing to be provided on termly basis to Council and to all partners.	Recommendation 21	Communications & Engagement Officer	December 2017	
	A24	Deliver a promotional campaign around PPD, Info-engine and DEWIS.	Recommendation 21	Communications & Engagement Officer	December 2017	
Medium At a corporate level, the Local authority must establish systems and structures to effectively monitor and evaluate progress within Children's Services	A25	Develop the Corporate Management Framework	Recommendation 23	Chief Executive	December 2017	

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
<p>Long term A multi-agency child protection protocol should be established to support decision making on the need for assessments in statutory children's services. This needs to be understood by staff and partners and consistently applied. Multi-agency quality assurance systems and training arrangements are required to support this.</p>	A26	Implement and fully embed the Regional Threshold Document across Children's Services and Partner Agencies.	Recommendation 27	Head of Children's Services	Launch 2 nd October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Threshold document launched. It will be promoted further through Child Protection Forums during November.
	A27	Work with Partners to review and strengthen multi-agency child protection protocol and practice.	Recommendation 27	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	March 2018	
	A28	Undertake Themed Audits to ensure that Thresholds are being consistently applied.	Recommendation 27	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	December 2017	
	A29	Undertake feedback events (on-line) to ensure that staff and partners understand and consistently apply thresholds.	Recommendation 27	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	February 2018	
	A30	Threshold Document to be included in all staff induction	Recommendation 27	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources	November 2017	
	A31	Promote and encourage the importance of the threshold document is included in partners agencies induction programme	Recommendation 27	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	December 2017	

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Long term The Local authority and partners must work together to develop a cohesive approach to the collection and analysis of information about the needs of communities, which includes the views of children and families. This should be used to inform the shaping of strategic plans to achieve effective alignment of service delivery between information, advice and assistance services, the preventative sector and statutory services.	A32	Ensure annual updates of the population and wellbeing assessment.	Recommendation 28	Strategic Programme Manager	March 2018	
	A33	Develop and implement the wellbeing and area plans ensuring robust reporting and monitoring through clear governance arrangements (RPB and PSB).	Recommendation 28	Regional Partnership Board Coordinator	June 2018	
	A34	Undertake thematic reports in relation to IAA and early intervention and prevention across the RPB partnership arrangements.	Recommendation 28	Regional Partnership Board Coordinator	January 2018	
	A35	Develop management information data that is robust, reliable, and accessible and provides insight to develop patterns.	Recommendation 28	Strategic Programme Manager	December 2017	
Long term Future changes to structure and service delivery need to include consultation with all stakeholders in its shape and development. The change needs to be incremental and with changes implemented at a pace that will ensure the full	A36	Review and strengthen engagement and consultation processes within the management of change policy to include service user and partner agencies.	Recommendation 29	Professional Lead - Human Resources Management and Development	December 2017	

Recommendation	Action No.	Action	Reference to CSSIW Report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
involvement of staff and young people and ensure children are not placed at risk.	A37	Strengthen and implement the communications and engagement strategy for children services to include formal and informal engagement for a wide range of stakeholders	Recommendation 29	Communications & Engagement Officer	January 2018	

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Priority Improvement Area B - Case Management /Strategy and Models of Care Partnership Improvement Board Sponsor – Director of Education

Theme B: Case Management\Strategy and Models of Care	
<p>CSSIW Analysis</p> <p>The Local authority must ensure assessments are carried out within statutory timescales and are undertaken in partnership with children and families.</p> <p>The quality of assessments and plans must be improved to ensure they are consistently of a good quality, with a clear focus on the needs, risks, and strengths of children and families, and that desired outcomes, timescales and accountabilities for actions are clear.</p> <p>The quality and consistency and timeliness of record keeping must be improved; all staff and managers must ensure that records are of good quality, up to date and systematically stored</p> <p>The Local authority must clarify the role and purpose of Powys People Direct (PPD) within the overall provision of information, advice and assistance and must ensure staff and partners have clear guidance to support decision making. The Local authority must ensure that all staff are suitably trained, skilled and supported to deliver this role. A clear protocol is required between PPD and the Emergency Duty Team to ensure cases are not lost between services.</p> <p>The Local authority must implement an effective model of assessment to support its interventions with families, which is understood by all staff and partners, underpinned by robust training and development.</p> <p>The Local authority must ensure its fostering service provides consistent support, training and guidance to foster carers in order to improve the quality and availability of placements.</p> <p>The Local authority must ensure that all care and support plans have a clear focus on outcomes for children, which incorporate the voice of the child.</p>	<p>Success Criteria</p> <p>The Local authority works with partner organisations to develop, understand, co-ordinate, keep up to date and make best use of statutory, voluntary and private sector information, assistance and advice resources available in their area. All people, including carers, have access to comprehensive information about services and get prompt advice and support, including information about their eligibility and what they can expect by way of response from the service. Arrangements are effective in delaying or preventing the need for care and support. People are aware of and can easily make use of key points of contact. The service listens to people and begins with a focus on what matters to them. Effective signposting and referring provides people with choice about support and services available in their locality, particularly preventative services. Access arrangements to statutory social services provision are understood by partners and the people engaging with the service are operating effectively.</p> <p>All people entitled to an assessment of their care and support needs receive one in their preferred language. All carers who appear to have support needs are offered a carer's needs assessment, regardless of the type of care provided, their financial means or the level of support that may be needed. People experience a timely assessment of their needs which promotes their independence and ability to exercise choice. Assessments have regard to the personal outcomes and views, wishes and feelings of the person subject of the assessment and that of relevant others including those with parental responsibility. This is in so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with promoting their wellbeing and safety and that of others. Assessments provide a clear understanding of what will happen next and results in a plan relevant to identified needs. Recommended actions, designed to achieve the outcomes that matter to people, are identified and include all those that can be met</p>

through community based or preventative services as well as specialist provision.

People experience timely and effective multi-agency care, support, help and protection where appropriate. People using services are supported by care and support plans which promote their independence, choice and wellbeing, help keep them safe and reflect the outcomes that are important to them. People are helped to develop their abilities and overcome barriers to social inclusion.

Actions arising from risk management or safety plans are successful in reducing actual or potential risk. People are not left in unsafe or dangerous environments. Policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding and protection are well understood and embedded and contribute to a timely and proportionate response to presenting concerns. The Local authority and its partners sponsor a learning culture where change to and improvement of professional performance and agency behaviours can be explored in an open and constructive manner.

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Recommendation	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Immediate The Local authority must ensure assessments are carried out within statutory timescales and are undertaken in partnership with children and families.	B1	Review staffing levels in teams.	Recommendation 1	Strategic Programme Manager	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management information reports developed and available to all Team Managers, Senior Managers and HOS. • Member's reports available which detail assessments which are completed within statutory timescales. • Developed <i>What Matters</i> booklet and circulated to all staff. • Assessment form has been amended to include mandatory field where worker indicate that the <i>What Matters</i> Booklet has been completed. • An initial quality assurance exercise on sample of assessments completed. • All staff, Managers and Members will have access to management information in relation to key performance indicators.
	B2	Increase capacity within teams where there are identified resource issues.	Recommendation 1	Senior Manager (Area North)	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of concern identified • Additional staff being sourced • ICT equipment ordered
	B3	Allocate cases.	Recommendation 1	Senior Manager (Area North)	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unallocated cases identified • Short 3 x weekly meetings to monitor progress held. • Data Cleanse is under way.
	B4	Review caseloads.	Recommendation 1	Senior Manager (Area North)	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report established. • Areas of concern identified • Additional staff being sourced

Recommendation	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
	B5	Social Workers to complete the “ <i>What Matters</i> ” document with the child/ young person as part of all assessments.	Recommendation 1	Senior Manager (Area North)	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication to all staff has been issued to inform of this requirement. • Quality assurance audit undertaken to ensure that children and young people’s views are recorded within assessments.
	B6	Review assessment form to ensure recording mechanism to evidence that children & young people have been part of the assessment.	Recommendation 1	Senior Manager (Area North)	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment form has been amended to include recording mechanism to ascertain whether children and young people have been a part of the assessment. It has been included as a mandatory field on the assessment form. • Report developed to inform SMT of where this has been completed.
	B7	Implement the new Quality Assurance Framework.	Recommendation 1	Head of Children’s Services	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance framework has been developed and signed off by SMT. Plans for rollout are being developed. • The quality assurance tools within the framework have been built within the WCCIS system and are currently being tested.
	B8	Provide management reports that enable the effective application of performance management protocols which will determine the efficacy of the service e.g. statutory timescales	Recommendation 1	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD & Senior Manager - Child Care	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular 3xweekly meetings to monitor performance are in place. • Reporting mechanisms are in place so that managers are easily able to identify assessments reaching timescale. • Assessment forms have been revised to include a section for managers’ comments when a decision to extend the assessment past 10 days is taken.

Recommendation	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
		for assessments are adhered to.		North & PPD		
	B9	Team Managers to have easy access to performance data to assist in the management of timescales. Early identifier and trigger so that areas of concern can be addressed.	Recommendation 1	Strategic Programme Manager	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting mechanisms are in place so that managers are easily able to identify assessments reaching timescale. • Communication which informs all Team Managers about how to access the reports has been circulated. • Training provided to all Team Managers as part of the Operational Management Team meeting on how to access the reports. • Reports have been revised in consultation with managers so that the reports are presented in the most appropriate and helpful way.
Medium The quality of assessments and plans must be improved to ensure they are consistently of a good quality, with a clear focus on the needs, risks, and strengths of children and families, and that desired outcomes, timescales and accountabilities for actions are clear.	B10	Implement a Quality Assurance Framework for assessments and plans.	Recommendation 8	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	November 2017	
	B11	Ensure regular supervision to facilitate monitoring of the quality of assessments and plans.	Recommendation 8	All Managers	November 2017	
	B12	Deliver training for outcome-focused planning.	Recommendation 8	Professional Lead - Business	November 2017	

Recommendation	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
				Support Resources		
	B13	Implement agreed strengths-based model across the Service and with partner agencies.	Recommendation 8	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	31 st January 2018	
Medium The quality and consistency and timeliness of record keeping must be improved; all staff and managers must ensure that records are of good quality, up to date and systematically stored.	B14	Update policies, procedures and business processes so that they clearly set out requirements for all staff.	Recommendation 9	Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD / Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	Phase 1 – November 2017 Phase 2 – January 2018	
	B15	Recruit additional data quality clerks to support staff in ensuring that records on WCCIS are up to date.	Recommendation 9	Strategic Programme Manager	January 2018	•
	B16	Include requirements regarding record keeping in staff induction.	Recommendation 9	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources	December 2017	
	B17	Establish clear and up to date business processes that detail how and	Recommendation 9	Strategic Programme Manager	December 2017	

Recommendation	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
		where information should be recorded to ensure Management Information is accurate.				
	B18	Review workloads to ensure staff have the capacity to deliver high quality record keeping in a timely manner.	Recommendation 9	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	December 2017	
Medium The Local authority must clarify the role and purpose of Powys People Direct (PPD) within the overall provision of information, advice and assistance and must ensure staff and partners have clear guidance to support decision making. The Local authority must ensure that all staff are suitably trained, skilled and supported to deliver this role. A clear protocol is required between PPD and the Emergency Duty Team to ensure cases are not lost between services.	B19	Publish the requirements for PPD and set out how PPD will meet the requirements to deliver IAA.	Recommendation 10	Head of Children Services	January 2018	
	B20	Develop training and capacity within PPD for delivering IAA.	Recommendation 10	Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD / Senior Manager CYPP	November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Case completed to secure additional capacity within PPD. • Currently securing additional staff.
	B21	Review and strengthen handling of cases & transfer of information between EDT and PPD.	Recommendation 10	Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD	November 2017	

Recommendation	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Medium The Local authority must implement an effective model of assessment to support its interventions with families, which is understood by all staff and partners, underpinned by robust training and development.	B22	Implement the strengths-by staff within Children's Services and partners.	Recommendation 11	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's Services have made a commitment to implement signs of safety as an effective model of assessment that is understood by all staff and partners.
	B23	Implement Signs of Safety or similar model.	Recommendation 11	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Managers have visited other local authorities to explore and research the model and how this could be effectively implemented within Powys
Medium The Local authority must ensure its fostering service provides consistent support, training and guidance to foster carers in order to improve the quality and availability of placements.	B24	Complete listening and learning exercise with foster carers.	Recommendation 12	Improvement Programme Manager	October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening and learning exercise undertaken involving interviews with permanent and respite Foster Carers, and recommendations concluded.
	B25	Develop recommendations from foster care review for service improvement.	Recommendation 12	Senior Manager Resources & Placements	January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	B26	Develop peer support for foster carers.	Recommendation 12	Senior Manager Resources & Placements	Phase 1 - January 2018 Phase 2 - June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Recommendation	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
	B27	Develop an intensive support service for carers with children with more complex needs.	Recommendation 12	Senior Manager Resources & Placements	December 2017	
	B28	Develop a policy framework for fostering.	Recommendation 12	Senior Manager Resources & Placements	November 2017	
	B29	Review and implement a recruitment and retention strategy for Foster Carers.	Recommendation 12	Senior Manager Resources & Placements	November 2017	
Medium The Local authority must ensure that all care and support plans have a clear focus on outcomes for children, which incorporate the voice of the child.	B30	Engage with staff to ensure care and support plans are SMART and outcome focused and include the voice of the child.	Recommendation 13	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	December 2017	
Long term The Local authority must ensure compliance with the	B31	Identify the number of Welsh speaking staff.	Recommendation 26	Chief Executive	January 2018	

Recommendation	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
active offer of the Welsh language.						
	B32	Ensure client languages and preference are recorded on WCCIS.	Recommendation 26	Head of Children Services	January 2018	
	B33	Ensure cases are allocated in accordance with language requirements.	Recommendation 26	Head of Children Services	January 2018	
	B34	Review capacity within Children's Services for provision of the active offer in advocacy.	Recommendation 26	Strategic Programme Manager	September 2018	
	B35	Target recruitment, including amendment to job roles and the requirement to speak Welsh	Recommendation 26	Strategic Programme Manager	September 2018	

Priority Improvement Area C - Workforce Partnership Improvement Board Sponsor – To be agreed

Theme C: Workforce

CSSIW analysis

Arrangements for Team Managers and senior practitioners should be reviewed to ensure capacity to effectively and consistently provide management and leadership oversight and testing of decision making along with support and direction for frontline staff.

The Local authority and senior managers should take steps to improve the frequency, consistency and quality of supervision for front line staff; an assurance mechanism must be implemented to ensure compliance with expectations and quality of decision making, recordkeeping and reporting.

Caseloads monitoring is required to ensure there is sufficient capacity for workers to engage effectively with children and their families.

Success criteria

Social Workers in front-line teams have manageable caseloads. The supervision policy is embedded within all service areas. The quality of supervision is reflective and analytical. Social Workers are supported in their interventions with children through reflective supervision.

Effective interventions delivered to children and their families. Increased Positive feedback/compliments from Service Users. Reduction in the use of agency staff. Average time to fill vacant posts is reduced.

Improved employee awareness of Legislative and statutory requirements across the Council. Children and their families are receiving high quality Social Work interventions that improve Outcomes. New Managers have the skills and knowledge required to effectively undertake their role.

Recommendations	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Immediate Arrangements for Team Managers and senior practitioners should be reviewed to ensure capacity to effectively and consistently provide management oversight and testing of decision making along with support and direction for frontline staff.	C1	Review current staffing levels.	Recommendation 2	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current permanent structure confirmed. Current vacancies confirmed. Current caseloads being reported and monitored. Away day hosted by Head of Service for all Operational Managers.
	C2	Review management capacity.	Recommendation 2	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	November 2017	
	C3	Identify additional agency staff and deploy to areas of most need.	Recommendation 2	Head of Children Services	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Staff requirements defined and costed Numerous agencies have been contacted and arrangements are currently being put in place Additional ICT equipment has been ordered
	C4	Deliver specific induction programme for social Care Managers that ensures new managers have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their role in Powys in a timely way.	Recommendation 2	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources / Senior Manager Resources & Placements	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Induction programme has been developed and signed off at SMT. Induction Programme has been circulated to all managers and staff and is now live.
	C5	Identify additional capacity to undertake investigations of and	Recommendation 2	Head of Children's Services	November 2017	

Recommendations	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
		disseminate learning from Stage 1 complaints.				
Immediate Senior managers should take steps to improve the frequency, consistency and quality of supervision for front line staff; an assurance mechanism must be implemented to ensure compliance with expectations and quality of decision making, recordkeeping and reporting.	C6	Publish and implement Quality Assurance framework.	Recommendation 3	Head of Children's Services	November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality assurance framework has been developed and signed off by SMT. Plans for rollout are currently being developed. The quality assurance tools within the framework have been built within the WCCIS system and are currently being tested. Supervision Pro forma developed and implemented.
	C7	Implement the updated supervision policy.	Recommendation 3	Strategic Programme Manager	October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supervision policy has been updated and signed off by SMT. Circulated to all staff Pro forma for recording supervision to support consistency and quality.
	C8	Establish a recording mechanism for supervision.	Recommendation 3	Strategic Programme Manager	October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recording mechanism for supervision has been agreed. Communication to all staff on how to record has been issued.
	C9	Audit the quality of supervision.	Recommendation 3	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	November 2017	
	C10	Receive and analyse monthly supervision reports.	Recommendation 3	Head of Children's Services	October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision report has been developed and reported to SMT. Performance is being monitored and areas of concern addressed.

Recommendations	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision reports are currently under development so that they are accessible to all Team Managers in a live environment.
Immediate Caseloads monitoring is required to ensure there is sufficient capacity for workers to engage effectively with children and their families.	C11	Redistribute case work and increase management oversight.	Recommendation 4	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current caseloads being reported and monitored.
	C12	Recruit additional staff as identified to ensure sufficient capacity for workers to effectively engage with children and their families.	Recommendation 4	Senior Manager – Child Care South & CWD	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Staff requirements defined and costed. Agencies have been contacted and arrangements are currently being put in place
	C13	Streamline the recruitment process, ensuring sufficient business support, to ensure timely recruitment of staff.	Recommendation 4	Human Resources Business Partner	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement that internal VAS panel process does not apply to children services during improvement period.
	C14	Identify and agree a strengths-based care planning model.	Recommendation 4	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement to adopt Signs of Safety model.
	C15	A brief outline of the chosen model to be provided to all staff.	Recommendation 4	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Managers visited other Local Authorities to research model and consider further how best this would be adopted in Powys

Recommendations	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Medium The Local authority must ensure every employee understands the legislative and statutory requirements in safeguarding children and action is taken to address poor performance.	C16	Reinforce mandatory training for all Council staff to communicate legislative and statutory requirements involved in safeguarding responsibilities.	Recommendation 14	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources	January 2018	
	C17	Develop a clear Social Work Training Strategy which covers the necessary skills and behaviours to develop a workforce that is sufficient to improve quality of Social Work practice to improve outcomes.	Recommendation 14	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources / Senior Manager Resources & Placement	December 2017	
	C18	Ensure that there is a specific induction programme for social Care Managers that means new managers have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their role.	Recommendation 14	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources	November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction programme has been developed and signed off at SMT • Induction Programme has been circulated to all managers and staff and is now live
	C19	Ensure that all new starters to Children's Services are successfully inducted and given the right information at the right time to settle into their role and equip them to do a good job.	Recommendation 14	Professional Lead - Business Support Resources	December 2017	
Medium A robust workforce strategy should be	C20	Develop a social care Workforce Strategy (including Talent &	Recommendation 15	Senior Officer - Culture &	January 2018	

Recommendations	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
developed as a matter of urgency to include short, medium and long-term plans for recruitment and retention of social work and senior staff. Permanent appointments are required in key posts as a high priority to provide resilience and stability to the service.		Succession Planning) which ensures staff are supported to reach their potential.		Leadership Development		
	C21	Exit Interviews to be undertaken with all social care staff and used to inform the Workforce Strategy.	Recommendation 15	Senior Officer - Culture & Leadership Development	January 2018	
	C22	SMT to consider feedback from exit interviews on a quarterly basis.	Recommendation 15	Senior Officer - Culture & Leadership Development	January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit interviews currently being undertaken. Report of interviews and the feedback being reported to SMT.
	C23	Develop a clear and transparent selection process that ensures high quality social work staff are selected.	Recommendation 15	Senior Officer - Culture & Leadership Development	January 2018	
	C24	Develop a process to gather and review candidate feedback.	Recommendation 15	Senior Officer - Culture & Leadership Development	January 2018	
	C25	Develop a corporate workforce strategy which covers Roles/Responsibilities, Behaviours at a Senior Level and right the way across and throughout the organisation.	Recommendation 15	Senior Officer - Culture & Leadership Development	January 2018	
	C26	Train all managers in using and understanding Performance Management Information.	Recommendation 15	Senior Officer - Culture &	January 2018	

Recommendations	Action No	Action	Ref to CSSIW report	Lead	Timescale	Progress
				Leadership Development		

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Priority Improvement Area D – Practice and Quality Assurance

Improvement Board Sponsor – Head of Children’s Services

Theme D: Practice and Quality Assurance	
<p>CSSIW Analysis</p> <p>An assurance mechanism must be implemented as a priority to ensure compliance with legislation, statutory guidance and protocols regarding Looked After Children and children at risk.</p> <p>Performance management and quality assurance arrangements, including scrutiny of service demand and routine auditing of the quality of practice needs to be embedded so that managers at all levels have timely, relevant and accurate performance and quality assurance information.</p> <p>At a corporate level the Local authority must establish systems and structures effectively monitor and evaluate progress within Children’s Services’.</p> <p>The consistent application of a quality assurance system must be implemented to ensure families who are referred to the Team around the Family service are not subject to drift and delay and to ensure there are targeted plans in place which are reviewed and checked by managers.</p> <p>The Local authority must strengthen the oversight of the response to complaints to improve reporting and analysis and ensure there is a mechanism to capture lessons learned.</p>	<p>Success Criteria</p> <p>Regular auditing, to ensure management oversight of the quality of work being undertaken. Independent oversight in respect of care planning for children who are looked after</p> <p>All staff will have access to policies and procedures which will can be used to effectively guide their practice. Appropriate referrals are made by all agencies based on an agreed threshold.</p> <p>Management information is analysed at all levels of the Service and plays a key role in decision making. Evidence that Management Information is informing Decision Making. Performance against key performance indicators is readily available.</p> <p>Complaints are responded to in a timely manner. Independent investigation of all complaints. Learning from complaints shared across the service and leading to improvements in practice. Analysis of complaints to inform planning and delivery of services.</p>

Recommendation	Action No	Action	CSSIW Recommendation	Lead	Timescale	Progress
Immediate An assurance mechanism must be implemented as a priority to ensure compliance with legislation, statutory guidance and protocols regarding Looked After Children and children at risk.	D1	Implement a Quality Assurance framework	Recommendation 7	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Assurance Framework developed and signed off by SMT Tools developed and built within WCCIS
	D2	Develop the IRO Monitoring form.	Recommendation 7	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRO form currently under review
	D3	Review current policies and procedures to ensure that they comply with legislation, statutory guidance and protocols with regards to Looked After Children and children at risk.	Recommendation 7	Head of Children's Services	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task and finish group setup to consider all current policies and business processes. Updated all Fostering Policies including Allegations against Foster Carers Updated the Care and Wellbeing Assessment Policy and procedures 3 x Workshops setup for November to ensure appropriate engagement with staff on the development and amendments of current processes and forms including the step-up/step-down process.
	D4	Implement and embed the regional threshold document.	Recommendation 7	Head of Children's Services	07 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Threshold document launched at Child Protection Multi Agency Foras
Medium Performance management and quality	D5	Develop detailed Management information	Recommendation 22	Head of Children Service	December 2017	

Recommendation	Action No	Action	CSSIW Recommendation	Lead	Timescale	Progress
assurance arrangements, including scrutiny of service demand and routine auditing of the quality of practice needs to be embedded so that managers at all levels have timely, relevant and accurate performance and quality assurance information. At a corporate level the Local authority must establish systems and structures to effectively monitor and evaluate progress within Children's Services.		dashboards in line with service requirements.				
	D6	A detailed management report in line with service requirements	Recommendation 22	Head of Children Service	Feb 2018	
	D7	Make Performance Management a standard agenda item for SMT and OMT.	Recommendation 22	Head of Children Services	December 2017	
	D8	Make robust Performance information available to Elected Members and ensure effective scrutiny.	Recommendation 22	Scrutiny Manager\Strategic Programme Manager	December 2017	
	D9	Data Quality Clerks to work with the service to ensure that available information is robust and reliable.	Recommendation 22	Head of Children Services	December 2017	
Medium A quality assurance system must be established to ensure families who are referred to the Team Around the Family (TAF) service are not subject to drift and delay and to ensure there are targeted plans	D10	Apply appropriate and timely step up and step-down process and recording systems between TAF and Children Services.	Recommendation 24	Strategic Programme Manager	December 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop setup for November to ensure appropriate engagement with staff on the development and amendments of current step up step down process.

Recommendation	Action No	Action	CSSIW Recommendation	Lead	Timescale	Progress
in place which are reviewed and checked by managers.						
<p>Medium</p> <p>The Local authority must strengthen the oversight of the response to complaints to improve reporting and analysis and ensure there is a mechanism to capture lessons learned.</p>	D11	Recruit a specific member of staff in Children's Services to investigate stage 1 complaints and disseminate learning from complaints across the service.	Recommendation 25	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	January 2018	

Appendix 1

Improving Outcomes for Children “What does good look like?”

Introduction

Amongst the most vulnerable children and young people in our society are those who need care and support under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. This is especially the case for children looked after by the Local authority and not by their parent(s) or within their wider families.

The Act gives each Local authority a responsibility for making sure that children in need of care and support receive the right help at the right time, to improve their well-being and protect them from harm. This means:

- identifying and assessing children who need care and support as early as possible;
- helping them to use the strengths in their families and resources in their communities to provide help and support; and
- intervening at a time which prevents needs becoming critical.

In addition, as Corporate Parents of children who are looked after, it is their responsibility to help keep them safe, to make sure that their experiences in care are positive, and to improve the access they have to opportunities for them to succeed in life, including after care support.

In carrying out these complex and high-profile tasks, it is the responsibility of a Local authority to establish how it is going to improve the general well-being of children and young people who need care and support, for whatever reason. This work should focus too on all stages of any ‘care journey’, saying how children and their families will be supported to stay together whenever it is safe to do so and, as a result, how it will minimise the need for children to become looked after. The Local authority is obliged to describe the types of care and the range of placements it wants to provide and commission for Looked After Children.

The overall strategy should identify how the needs of children, young people and their families will be met within the resources available to the Local authority for a specific period, both short-term and long-term, to ensure that services are sustainable and consistent. All these elements contribute to the delivery of an integrated pattern of services to children and young people.

It is essential that councils and their partners share a commitment to improving the effectiveness and quality of services provided to children and families in need of care and support. This means looking continuously for evidence about performance, from external sources but also through

sector-led improvement and learning processes such as peer reviews. These help the Local authority to identify what is working well and what changes are needed to achieve best practice and best value. The WLGA and SSIA have produced two very helpful documents, setting out a guide to carrying out peer reviewsⁱ and standards for Children's and Adults Services against which reviews can be conductedⁱⁱ is a constructive and supportive process with the central aim of helping councils improve.

Key Aims

1. **To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to be looked after, by focusing on services which provide timely help, build on family's strengths and prevent greater problems arising.**
2. **To manage risk confidently and effectively when providing support to families where children and young people need to be safeguarded or they are judged to be on the 'edge of care'** by making sure that their needs are accurately assessed and met effectively, with positive outcomes for them. This includes supporting families to avoid children becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks so that children become looked after by the council only where this is clearly in their best interests.
3. **To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements for children who are looked after** to meet the diverse range of their needs and circumstances.
4. **To give children and young people clearly planned journeys through care and into adulthood** which remain focused on achieving care and support plans, prevent drift, enable them to be reunited with family and friends where possible, have stable placements and exit the care system with good prospects for improved life chances.

These aims are underpinned by the following principles:

- a. The responsibility for meeting the needs of children and young people looked after or at risk of becoming looked after rests across all services for children, including statutory and independent providers.
- b. Most children are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families.
- c. Preventative services and early intervention to support children in need and their families should be provided in ways that give them every

chance to stay together.

- d. Where children cannot be supported within their immediate family, there will be help available for assisting them to make private arrangements within their wider family and friendship networks and, where necessary, to make these arrangements permanent.
- e. Formal kinship fostering arrangements will be explored as the preferred alternative arrangement where it is necessary for the Local authority to share parental responsibility or intervene in managing risk and protecting children.
- f. Multi-agency arrangements to assessing and managing risk to vulnerable children and young people need to be robust.
- g. Local authorities have a responsibility for ensuring that intensive family support is available on a multi-agency basis for families where children or young people are on the edge of care.
- h. Where a child's needs cannot be adequately met through the arrangements already described, the majority will have their needs met best in a substitute family.
- i. Residential care placements will be made only where the complexity of a child or young person's needs mean they are unable to live within a family setting or where a young person is subject to a Court Ordered Secure Remand.
- j. Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.
- k. Placement requests should be defined in terms of the child/young person's needs. It is the role of the Local authority to consider the most appropriate type of placement to meet these needs, with due regard given to the available resources.
- l. All Looked After Children of statutory school age should receive appropriate education provision regardless of their placement and ability to access school. Providing appropriate support to enable engagement in education is just as important as finding suitable care placements for Looked After Children.
- m. Placements should support a positive transition to independence, adulthood, education, employment, and training and, where applicable, resettlement back into the community from custodial settings.

Aim 1: To support families to stay together

Key Objectives

- i. The responsibility for meeting the needs of children and young people in need of care and support and tackling social welfare inequalities that increase the chances of becoming looked after rests across all public service provision for children.
- ii. Most children are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families who should be helped to use their own resources and resources within their communities .in times of difficulties.
- iii. Proportionate assessment, preventative services and early intervention to support children in need and their families should be provided quickly to give them every chance to stay together.

1.1 Children and young people's needs are best met in their own families wherever this can be safely supported. Helping families stay together needs to be a key objective for the Council and the agencies who work directly with children, young people and families. This can be achieved best through inclusive and coordinated approaches in the way all parts of the Council respond to families in need. All Council departments and agencies need to identify where children and families are struggling as early as possible, and offer good advice, information, assessment and interventions at the right level at the right time. This is especially the case where children are known to have adverse experiences which may impair their health or development (such as abuse or being in a household where there is domestic violence, substance misuse, mental illness or poverty).

1.2 The following shared commitments assist in achieving this objective.

- a. **The provision of an Information, Advice and Assistance Service in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act.** This will give families and professionals quick and easy access to a single point of contact providing information and advice about all the services available to children and families, and what they need to do when they have concerns about the welfare of a child. The service will be able to sign-post them on to targeted and specialist services as needed.
- b. **Ensuring that Social Workers and other staff can deliver best professional practice.** This will help to deliver outcome-based social work, incorporating empowerment, advocacy and respect for the rights of children and families.

- c. **Housing Services having a policy of giving priority help to families where there is a child known to Children and Young People Services who needs care and support.** This will help to secure and maintain tenancies of safe, affordable social housing; prioritising the needs of families with a disabled child who require adaptations to be made to the property using Disability Facilities Grants; assisting homeless families and young people to exercise their rights and entitlements and providing advice to vulnerable tenants; and intervening early in the case of families in need who are at risk of eviction to prevent that happening.

Reflecting these commitments in the housing strategy, procurement plans and allocations policy, and in the objectives for using the Supporting People Grant will support Social Workers and housing officers to respond in partnership to the difficulties that families are experiencing. The needs of young people for accommodation and support should be fed into the Supporting People planning group and process.

- d. **The Education Department having a policy to enhance the education and attainment of children in need of care and support.** This can be achieved through making maximum use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and all forms of pastoral support such as the School Counselling Service, Putting Families First and Nurture Programmes. The ability of schools to continue to provide wrap around care such as breakfast and after school clubs needs to be protected in the areas of highest social deprivation where most children known to Social Services live.

The Council is also in a good position to offer apprenticeships, work experience and employment opportunities to young people most in need of care and support, and there is an overarching policy objective to work across the whole Council to reduce the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Schools and Social Workers need to share concerns about children's welfare and progress at the earliest point, and to continue to communicate well with one another and work in partnership with parents, kinship and foster carers to support the child's learning and development. Children in need of care and support, including those looked after, are a significant group at risk of school exclusion, placing pressure on their foster carers and sometimes resulting in placement breakdown. Central resources in Education Departments needed to prevent this, such as education welfare officers and learning support assistants, should be protected, with schools being supported to operate a policy of non-exclusion of children in need of care and support.

- e. **Enhancing access to Play, Leisure and Youth Services for children in need of care and support who may need additional help to make the most of opportunities universally available to all local children and young people.** This can be achieved by offering free or subsidised entry/places, directly supporting the aspirations of children in need to train in sports, and to take part in healthy lifestyles and activities. The Youth Service offers invaluable support to teenagers and young people who are hard to reach and teach, who may

be truanting from school and are disengaged from the curriculum, and are potentially vulnerable and at risk from exploitation, including sexual. Continuing to fund street/outreach youth work is vital to ensuring enough of this type of flexible, targeted support is available to meet needs.

- f. **Ensuring that eligible families who are expecting or have babies and young children under four make the fullest use of their entitlement to Flying Start services.** These include ante and post-natal services, health visiting, child care and parenting support, building up their ability and confidence to be responsible, safe and committed parents right from the start of a child's life. Families with children in need of care and support should have access to targeted co-ordinated help from early intervention and preventative services provided through the Welsh Government funding streams such as Families First.
- g. **Providing families where a child is at risk of offending, or at risk of re-offending with access to timely and targeted assessment and parenting support from the YOS preventative service.** This includes prioritising children whose cases are open to Children and Young People Services and working collaboratively across the Council on the Domestic Abuse Strategy and other Communities First initiatives that are active in promoting community safety and protecting vulnerable citizens.

Aim 2: To manage risk confidently and effectively when supporting families where Children or Young People are at the edge of care

Key Objectives

- i. Most children are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families.
- ii. Where children cannot be supported within their immediate family, there should be support for them to make private arrangements within their wider family and friendship networks and, where necessary, to make these permanent via Child Arrangements Orders.
- iii. Multi-agency arrangements to assessing and managing risk to vulnerable children and young people need to be robust.
- iv. Local authorities have a responsibility for ensuring that intensive family support is available on a multi-agency basis for families where children or young people are on the edge of care.

2.1 We need to ensure the right children become accommodated at the right time. To do this, we need to be able to manage risk safely with families who are approaching the threshold for care proceedings to be issued. We will carry out timely and proportionate assessments, agree a plan of action, and directly deliver and/or commission interventions which support families to make changes, always ensuring that children and young people are kept safe.

2.2 We need to support staff to make safe risk assessments and be confident about planning for and managing risk to a child across all settings. It will need other family members, nursery staff, teachers, housing officers, play and youth leaders and out of hours services to be clear about their role in helping to manage risk to a child, to be observant through their daily contact with children and families, and responsive to any welfare concerns they see. For children whose names are placed on the Child Protection Register, staff across the Council and agencies involved will work together under the All Wales Child Protection Procedures to protect children and safeguard them from harm. the following shared commitments will contribute to supporting children, young people and families 'at the edge of care':

- a. **Engagement of wider family and friendship networks.** When a family is struggling to cope or has reached a point of crisis, we will support them to explore whether there are people within their wider family and friendship network who can safely care for the child or

young person, either temporarily or on a permanent basis through private family arrangements. Research shows that family meetings or mediation based approaches are effective in achieving this.

- b. **Provision of intensive family support services.** This can be achieved by support from the multi-agency Intensive Family Support Service or other 'edge of care'/IFSS schemes.
- c. **Provision of multi-agency arrangements to assessing and managing risk.** The Local authority should have a formal agreement with other agencies about how it will operate an intelligence-led approach to assessing and managing risk to vulnerable children. There is a range of approaches which may be used including a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Missing Children protocols, Signs of Safety, etc.
- d. **Provision for children who cannot remain living with parents and for whom the family are making arrangements for permanency.** This can be achieved via a Child Arrangements Order. The plan for meeting future support needs should be based on a formal assessment and have a contractual basis.
- e. **Providing shared care and short breaks to enable families time limited opportunities to have respite or to resolve issues which have an adverse impact on their parenting capacity.** Families sometimes need respite from caring or time and space to resolve stressful, chaotic situations and achieve change. Short break care and respite have been provided for disabled children and young people and this has now extended to children and young people on the edge of care, reducing the need for them to come into longer term or permanent care. Use of Direct Payments and child-minding can assist families to access the most appropriate level of support when they need it.
- f. **Ensuring placements made in an emergency or at short notice have robust time limited care plans.** A small number of children and young people may require immediate accommodation because of a Court Order or because of their involvement in the Criminal Justice System. These arrangements need to be reviewed as early as possible to ensure that children accommodated in emergency situations have time limited plans in place that focus on rehabilitation to family and friends.
- g. **Provision of accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 presenting as homeless to Social Services or Housing.** In most cases, with mediation and social work input, young people can be supported to return home. It should be only those young people who genuinely do not have a suitable place to live that become looked after by the Local authority. If we are to succeed in supporting this group of vulnerable young people, it is important to have access to a range of appropriate short-term accommodation that allows the assessment to be completed and any family mediation work carried out. This would avoid the need to make more

expensive short-term arrangements which can often create false expectations and hamper efforts to return young people home. Access to services and support is managed and monitored.

- h. Maintaining effective working relationships with Family Courts.** This is a crucial relationship for local authorities and it needs to be managed well through regular contact with the judiciary and CAFCASS to monitor delivery of the court's expectations in terms of process and practice and to explain the policies adopted.

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Aim 3: To provide and commission a flexible and affordable range of high quality placements

Key Objectives

- i. Formal kinship fostering arrangements will be explored as the preferred alternative arrangement where it is necessary for the Local authority to share parental responsibility or intervene in managing risk and protect children.
- ii. Where a child's needs cannot be adequately met through the arrangements described in principles 4 and 5, the majority will have their needs met best in a substitute family, wherever possible within the area.
- iii. Residential placements will only be made where the complexity and challenge of a child or young person's needs mean they are unable to live within a family setting or where a young person is subject of a Court Ordered Secure Remand.
- iv. Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.
- v. Placement requests should be defined in terms of the child/young person's needs.

3.1 The Council should seek to provide or commission the right range of placements which provide positive experiences for children and young people who are looked after. The following shared commitments will assist it to provide and commission a range of placements which are good quality and value and respond to children's needs.

- a. **Increasing the number and capacity of local fostering placements.** Efforts continue to be focused on recruiting and retaining new foster carers, to ensure the Council has enough families with the right combination of skills who are supported to meet the diverse needs of children and young people. It needs foster carers who can manage very challenging behaviours, provide placements for young people involved in the Criminal Justice System (including on Remand), provide parent and baby placements, placements for disabled children and short term or emergency placements. It also need to recruit carers able to offer short breaks and respite placements to support children and young people to remain living at home or within their family network. The Council should have a fostering recruitment strategy and set annual targets have been set, complemented by regional recruitment work. It should explore the potential for reduced or waived Council Tax for foster carers, and for their prior consideration in allocations of larger Council housing properties.

- b. **Reducing inappropriate use made of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements and clearly specifying their role.** A successful recruitment strategy should aim to reduce the need to commission IFAs for new placements. Agencies can continue to play a role in complementing our in-house provision through targeted commissioning of more specialist provisions rather than being used because a Local authority foster placement is not available.
- c. **Managing demand for mainstream and specialist residential placements.** Mainstream residential care placements are needed for children and young people who may present challenging or risky behaviours. They may have experienced several placement breakdowns or they may be running away, misusing substances or be at risk of child sexual exploitation. They need the additional level of supervision and support that can be provided in staffed residential care. Specialist residential placements are needed for disabled children and young people with extremely complex and challenging needs, with staff who are experienced in providing the care they need.
- d. **Making fewer mainstream residential placements and make them closer to home.** For a very small number of children, a residential home will be the best environment to meet their needs and help them succeed. Staffing levels allow 24-hour support to be provided for the highest levels of need and most challenging types of behaviours.
- e. **Finding specialist placements which support older disabled children and young people locally.** Some severely disabled young people require 24-hour care. Children and Young People Services should agree a joint strategy with the Education Department and the Local Health Board.
- f. **Jointly commissioning accommodation for young people between the ages of 16 and 21 years.** We need to commission more independent or semi-independent living options such as supported housing, 'training flats' and supported lodgings for young people between the ages of 16 and 21 to support them at different levels of independence and to make a good transition into adulthood.

Aim 4: To give children and young people clearly planned journeys through care

Key Objectives

- i. Where a child's needs cannot be adequately met through the arrangements described in 4 and 5 above, the majority will have their needs met best in a substitute family provided preferably by in-house foster carers and, if not, with Independent Fostering Agency carers, wherever possible within the area.
- ii. Residential placements will only be made where the complexity and challenge of a child or young person's needs mean they are unable to live within a family setting or where a young person is subject of a Court Ordered Secure Remand.
- iii. Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.
- iv. Placement requests should be defined in terms of the child/young person's needs.
- v. All Looked After Children of statutory school age should receive appropriate education provision regardless of their placement and ability to access school. Providing appropriate support to enable engagement in education is just as important as finding suitable care placements for Looked After Children.
- vi. Placements should support positive transitions to independence, adulthood, education, employment and training equipping young people to succeed and improve their life chances.

4.1 Every looked after child should be offered the support of an independent advocate to help make sure their wishes and feelings are expressed and made known. Having a clear plan informed by their views is essential. A good plan ensures that children come into and leave care at the right time, and that they do not 'drift' through care. Children need clearly planned journeys which allow them to be re-united with family and friends wherever possible, or have stable placements with carers or in care homes, and they leave the care system positively when they are ready to do so.

4.2 A shared commitment to make this happen include the following actions.

- a. **Finding the right placements.** We need to ensure that the process of referral for a placement includes providing enough detailed information about the needs and circumstances of the child to support placement finding and making the best match possible with appropriate carers. We need to provide and source a wide range of high quality placements supported by integrated assessment and good planning.
- b. **Giving children stability and permanence as quickly as possible.** Giving children and young people, a sense of security, continuity and commitment is crucial to ensuring that they have a positive experience of being looked after. Permanence includes emotional, physical and legal stability. As corporate parents, the Council must commit to providing a plan to achieve permanence for all Looked After Children through:
 - reunification with their birth family
 - living with other family and friends
 - Child Arrangements Orders
 - long-term fostering
 - adoption.

The Council should agree and monitor plans for permanence, ensuring they remain focused on achieving reunification with families and friends where it is in the child's best interests and, where this is not possible, permanency via adoption or long-term fostering.

- c. **Monitoring drift in care planning.** Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) monitor a child's care plan at set intervals required by law. Once it is identified that a child can be reunified with family or friends (through rehabilitation, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015, Child Arrangements Orders), the IRO will monitor the revised care plan and oversee the process until it is concluded.

Social Workers will work with colleagues in child care legal teams and CAFCASS to review the legal status of all long-term placements to consider the revocation of Care Orders, or the granting of Child Arrangements Orders when this is appropriate for the child.

- d. **Continuing involvement of other agencies in placement decision making is critical.** It helps to ensure that a holistic approach to meeting the child's needs is taken (for example, minimising disruption to school attendance because of the placement location).
- e. **Ensuring all Looked After Children and young people receive a good education.** Providing the right education setting is just as

important as providing a suitable home environment. Becoming looked after is a dramatic change in the life of a child or young person and this can be even more significant if it results in a change of school at the same time.

When a child becomes looked after, substantial efforts should be made to keep them in the school they were attending before being accommodated, if this is safe and in their best interests to do so. To make this work, schools, Social Workers and carers need to work together to share information and plan effectively.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is an integral part of the care planning process. It helps schools to identify the learning and pastoral support needs of a looked after child, and sets out clearly the expectations of carers, Social Workers, teachers and others involved in helping the child or young person achieve their learning potential.

- f. **Helping young people prepare for adulthood and independence.** A vital part of the Council's role as corporate parents is to prepare young people it looks after for their adult lives. Young people will be supported to develop the necessary life skills, experience and confidence with the purpose of achieving as much independence as possible in preparation for adult life.

The future 'life chances' of care leavers are significantly improved if they can be supported to move into education, employment or training. Councils are committed to encouraging ambition and achievement from as early an age as possible, to developing work and training opportunities within the Council (including priority consideration for access to apprenticeship, workplace experience and employability skills training) and to supporting young care leavers in going on to tertiary education in university or college.

They must ensure that all Pathway Plans for young people leaving care address transitions issues in a timely manner to ensure appropriate links can be made across services and partner agencies. This will include for example Housing, Health, employers, colleges and universities, the benefits agency, Adult Social Services and with their families wherever there is a need identified for ongoing support to the young person. Young people need to be given meaningful opportunities to develop the support services they need and to monitor their impact.

- g. **Ensuring professional involvement is purposeful.** The roles and responsibilities of corporate parents, foster carers, Social Workers, IROs, teachers, specialist Looked After Children education and health professionals, advocates and guardians must be clear to ensure they feed into the planning and reviewing processes for Looked After Children. A child who is being looked after faces a confusing range of people with whom they must build relationships; they should rely on us to coordinate what we do and to always act in their best interests. The key is to consider what we would want to see happen for our own children.

ⁱⁱ. Social Services Peer Review Guide January 2016 file:///C:/Users/user/OneDrive/MAG/Peer%20Review/141216_Peer%20Review%20Manual%20Final_Draft.pdf

ⁱⁱ Children's and Adults' Services Social Services Peer Review Guide April 2016 <file:///C:/Users/user/OneDrive/MAG/Peer%20Review/Peer%20review%20-%20Childrens%20and%20Adults%20Standards.pdf>