



Cyngor Sir Powys County Council

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME 2017-2020

“Working together to ensure that Powys children and young people are safe, healthy, resilient, learning, fulfilled and have their voices heard, valued and acted on.”

POWYS CHILDREN'S SERVICES CHARTER

Children and families in Powys can expect:

- ✓ INCREASED WELL-BEING
we will provide high quality support to families and children.
- ✓ FIRST-RATE PROTECTION
we will keep children and young people as safe as possible.
- ✓ BEST PRACTICE
we will carry out professional responsibilities to high standards.
- ✓ FIRST-CLASS PERFORMANCE
we will achieve ambitious performance targets.

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Foreword

Powys County Council needs to change and improve. We fully accepted the findings of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) report published in October 2017 and the subsequent warning notice issued by Welsh Government. They found that we had failed to meet the high standards children and families in the county should expect and deserve. The report raised serious issues about how we provide Children's Services for the most vulnerable children in Powys; delivering improvements requires all the Council (not just Children's Services) to make this a priority.

The Council is committed to safeguarding children in Powys. This programme and plan have been approved by the Cabinet and by the Improvement Board. It will provide direction for deep and sustainable change and improvement to services for children and families. We understand the challenges facing the service and delivering the accompanying associated action will ensure that arrangements for safeguarding children and complying with the supporting legislative frameworks are robust and represent best practice.

The programme will build on the strengths of our staff; CSSIW recognised their resilience and professionalism in the face of many challenges. We recognise that, to be effective, Children's Services must be able to call on a wide range of corporate support services and so we will drive improvements across the whole Council to ensure that the service can deliver its duties. Staff and councillors will be assisted by the independent Improvement Board and by colleagues from across Wales and beyond who have offered their expert support. Together we will address key issues raised in the inspection report and bring about lasting improvement in this most critical of services.

The improvements are already underway and they will be continuous. We will look explore constantly how we can do better to achieve positive changes and monitor improvements. We believe that, by working with unity, integrity and clear purpose, we will have in place a service of which everyone can be proud and which helps children and families to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Cllr. Rosemarie Harris – Leader of Powys County Council and ***David Powell*** – Acting Chief Executive, Powys County Council

Why we need to improve

Statutory responsibilities

1. 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 these children 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.
2. 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.
3. 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 about 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.

2017 Inspection of Children's Services by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)

4. An inspection of Powys by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in July 2017 looked at the quality and effectiveness of children's services. It examined how children and families access help, care and support services and how well care and support is provided to meet their needs and keep children safe. The inspection also considered the quality of leadership, management and governance arrangements to develop and support services for children and young people.
5. In their report, CSSIW expressed 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.
6. The Inspectorate concluded that, as a consequence, children were being placed at risk. The inspection report ([Key Document 1](#)) contained 29 recommendations (prioritised over one year) in respect of case management, staffing, leadership, assurance, workforce, and interagency/partnership working.

Warning Letters from the Minister for Social Services and Public Health/Minister for Children and Social Care

7. The inspection prompted a Warning Notice on 17 October from the Minister for Social Services and Public Health to the Leader, concerning the steps the Council needed to take to address the serious concerns raised by CSSIW. It was issued under Part 8 of

the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, sections 150-161. Section 150 provided for the two grounds under which the Notice was issued.

- *Ground 1 - the local authority has failed; or is likely to fail to comply with a duty that is social services function; and*
- *Ground 3 - the local authority is failing, or is likely to fail, to perform a social services function to an adequate standard.*

8. Section 151 allows Welsh Ministers to give a local authority a Warning Notice if they are satisfied that one of the Section 150 grounds is met. Under section 151, the actions required by the Council to deal with the Minister's grounds and reasons for intervention were:

- to prepare an Improvement Plan (Key Document 14);
- for the Improvement Plan to be delivery focussed and set out both short and long term milestones;
- for an Improvement Board to be established to oversee the Improvement Plan;
- for an Interim Director of Social Services to be appointed (Key Document 4);
- for a strategy to fill vacancies within Children's Social Services to be prepared (Key Document 9);
- for an agreed Improvement Plan to be submitted within 20 days of the publication of CSSIW's inspection report;

9. There is a requirement under section 151(3) (a) and (b) that the Welsh Ministers lay a copy of the Warning Notice with the National Assembly for Wales within 21 days of its despatch and then report to the National Assembly for Wales on the action taken by the Council within 90 days of giving the Notice.

10. A second letter from the Minister clarified expectations around the establishment, constitution and purpose of the Improvement Board. It made clear that the Board should be independent of current Council officers and elected members in terms of its oversight of the delivery of an Improvement Plan which addresses all the issues raised in the CSSIW Inspection Report. The Board's line of accountability should be directly to the Leader. In terms of its role and purpose, the Board would be expected to formally approve the final version of the Improvement Plan. It would also oversee handling of any queries or complaints received as a result of the inspection and ensure that there were safe and trusted mechanisms in place for staff to express views and/or concerns about their work or working practices. All of these responsibilities were to be formally set out in the Improvement Board's

Terms of Reference (Key Document 2). The Board was to be chaired by Jack Straw, with Phil Hodgson and Geoff Burrows as members together with a representative to ensure that the rights and voice of the child are heard.

11. A follow-up visit by the Inspectors in December 2017 identified the following as issues of concern:

- the need for increased understanding and ownership of the improvement plan by all staff;
- increased understanding of the principles and practice of the Social Services and Well-being Act among front line staff, which is likely to require further training and corporate support;
- increased consistency of front line practice between teams across the county;
- increased engagement with, and support by, key partners in driving improvements in support for vulnerable children and families in Powys;
- provision of staff training on child sexual exploitation;
- effective and reliable performance and quality monitoring; and
- ensuring supervision arrangements are realistic, effective and well recorded;
- the quality of operational practice which was particularly evident when inspectors read case files;
- elongated timescales for the completion of assessments and care and support plans and lack of management sign off;
- frequency of statutory visits for looked after child and those on the child protection register remains an area for improvement;
- little reference to direct work with children or reference to commissioning of specialist resources;
- safeguarding practice issues including use of risk assessments, support to children at risk of child sexual exploitation and multi-agency involvement.

12. On 15 January 2018, the Minister for Children and Social Care issued a follow-up warning notice under the same grounds as the first. He recognised that the Council is on a journey of improvement and he was pleased that there were early signs of improvement and improved practice. He noted that the Council had appointed an interim Director of Social Services and an

Improvement Board and started to implement the first iteration of its improvement plan. The next phase of actions he required were:

- To submit a revised Improvement Plan to Care Inspectorate Wales (formerly, CSSIW) and a copy to the Director of Social Services and Integration, Welsh Government no later than 7 February 2018. The revised plan is to include actions for improvement which the authority will achieve -
 - within 6 months of the date of this notice and
 - within 12 months of the date of this notice and
 - within a period which goes beyond 12 months from the date of this notice up until January 2020.
- The actions for improvement must address the findings described in CCSIW's letter and appendix one dated 4 January 2018 to the Interim Director of Social Services issued following CSSIW's monitoring visit in December 2017;
- Once the revised plan has been submitted, an addendum to this notice will be issued requiring Powys County Council to achieve the improvement actions within the time periods specified in the plan and these will be the relevant compliance periods for the purpose of section 151(2)(d);
- To introduce a quality assurance framework to improve consistency and standards of front line practice across the county. The framework must be drafted by 31 March 2018 and the authority must be able to provide substantial evidence of implementation of the framework by 30 June 2018;
- To continue to arrange for an Improvement Board to oversee the actions of the Interim Director, to provide constructive challenge and strategic oversight of the Interim Director's actions as regards all social services functions relating to children;
- The Interim Director to provide monthly reports to the Improvement Board and Leader of the Council with a copy to the Director of Social Services and Integration, Welsh Government.

The Notice states that, if Powys County Council does not carry out the actions set out within the specified period satisfactorily, Welsh Ministers are minded to more directly intervene in one or more of the methods of intervention provided for under sections 152-161 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The Voice of Children, Young People and Families

13. A Child Practice Review, completed in 2017, identified several key areas for learning which have helped to shape this improvement programme and plan. Reviewers had the opportunity to meet with a group of young people, to help gain a clearer understanding of their experiences as a young person in care, leaving care or getting ready to transition into adulthood. All the young people spoke of their absolute fears about leaving care and being cut adrift. They wanted their corporate parents and current carers to look after them as they would their own children, being caring and caring enough to challenge them. Their messages were clear but so too was the extent to which the Council was unable to meet many of their expectations.

- Allow young people the chance to make mistakes, leaving care is scary and we might want to leave then come back so plan for that, it's not 'all or nothing'.
- Foster carers are brilliant, but they never replace our actual family so don't forget that, as we don't, when it comes to the time that we have to leave care.
- Teach us how to do the simplest things that you take for granted like what does 'bleeding a radiator' mean when you live on your own in a flat and your heating breaks. That just sounds like a mad thing to tell someone to do.
- Remember to make decisions with us and when we are confused, make them for us, like your real parents would do. We need you even though we don't always think so at the time.
- Don't forget that once I've left care, I've got no one to ask about my history and what happened to me when. So, tell us the truth about our life story, don't fluff it up!
- Make sure we know when things can really start (apprenticeships, further education, work or university) so that they are not just promises that never go anywhere.
- Remember the good things that we achieve and help us hold on to them, not just all the mistakes we make.
- Let us stay with our foster carers until it's the right time to leave, just like their own kids.

14. We have significant amounts of other evidence accumulated from a wide range of sources (children and families, our own staff, advocates, complaints processes, representations by elected Members, AMS and MPs fellow professionals and partner agencies) that there have been serious shortfalls in our ability to meet the care and support needs of vulnerable children and families.

A growing mismatch between the Council's expressed priorities and its performance

15. Local authorities in Wales differ in their capacity for meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families. However, the problems identified by the Inspectors in Powys are exceptionally significant, generic and commonplace, reaching into many areas of practice and service provision.

16. In their report and recommendations, the Inspectors set out some possible explanations for this state of affairs. The service had depended heavily on short-lived appointments, interim managers at senior levels and agency front line staff. This has been a source of instability and discontinuity especially in responding to the considerable changes required to implement the Social Services and Well-being Act. It coincided with a period of financial challenges and anticipated overspends, the introduction of a new electronic records management system in April 2017 and the commissioning by the local authority of a major external review of both adult and children's services which was completed in 2016. Inspectors found that implementing the recommendations of the external review further exacerbated failings in children's services, destabilised the workforce to a significant extent and consequently placed children at risk of harm.

17. Children and young people did not appear to be well served by the arrangements for getting access to services in Powys. A poor approach to assessment and care and support planning, combined with inconsistent management of risk and lack of awareness about sexual exploitation, also placed children at risk of harm. Child protection processes did not always comply with statutory guidance, with delays in investigations and assessments being undertaken and limited completion of statutory visits. There was evidence of missed opportunities to safeguard children, despite requests for support.

18. These serious performance issues in front-line services mean that we must acknowledge the need for the strongest possible commitment in Children's Services to improving unacceptable standards of practice. Vulnerable families and the Council have a

right to expect from the staff a collective and individual obligation to meeting professional responsibilities as set out in the relevant codes of practice for all those working in social services. However, inspectors also attributed these failings to instability in management, poor and confused direction and weak governance. Inspectors noted the commitment of the staff, who had shown resilience and professionalism whilst coping with significant changes and depletion in support services and leadership capacity. They saw real commitment to protect and respond to safeguarding children in very difficult circumstances. Staff had been mutually supportive through challenging and difficult times and had shown a real desire to move on. “However, without effective support and capacity to undertake the work front-line staff cannot be expected to undertake the complex work required in children’s social services.”

19. As the inspectors recognised, the Social Services Directorate was very much affected by shortfalls within the Council. Plans for improvement did not receive their full support. Some key aspects of the new legislative framework for care, support and well-being were not acknowledged adequately at corporate and political levels. Changes in senior management brought about changes in direction and priorities which caused inconsistency and confusion. Council-wide statutory responsibilities such as safeguarding and corporate parenting were not embedded in executive, scrutiny or senior management arrangements. Support from corporate services was inadequate and managers in social services were deflected from focusing on statutory work to deal with increased bureaucracy. Some poor decisions about resource management in social care were made, with a programme of severe and unrealistic efficiency savings. Partnership working suffered from delays in making key decisions. .
20. The impact of this legacy is difficult to put behind us. Feeling undervalued and marginalised, some staff have become sceptical about prospects for positive and sustained change. However, recent developments are beginning to secure much better support for children’s services across the Council.
21. This is the context in which Powys County Council is embarking on an ambitious, far-reaching and urgent programme of reform.

Our improvement journey so far

22. The inspection raised serious concerns about leadership, management and practice in Powys Children's Services. The Council fully accepted the findings in the inspection report published on 17 October and the subsequent warning notice issued by Welsh Government. It quickly acknowledged the need for urgent and sustained change which will demonstrate our genuine commitment to safeguarding children in Powys. The Council produced on time its initial improvement plan, designed to provide a comprehensive response to the recommendations in the report and also one that matches the scale of the challenges we face.
23. The plan set out our goal: to move Powys as quickly as possible from its current position in respect of children's services to a place of real strength and exemplary performance. We acknowledge that this goal will require considerable efforts to reshape children's services and also a coherent direction sustainable over the next three years. Working closely with the Improvement Board, CSSIW, Welsh Government, regional and other key partners, the Council is able now to set out comprehensively both the urgent and the long-term work needed. We have done so in this second iteration of the overall programme of change and the action plan.
24. As an organisation, we have been achieving important milestones in our improvement journey since the inspection in 2017 – both those set for us and those we have planned. It has taken a considerable amount of collective effort. In terms of outcomes, there have been real benefits to some children and families. However, it is still early in the improvement process. Some of our work to date has confirmed that we are seeking to make progress from a very low starting point in important areas such as professional practice and corporate ownership of service priorities. On the other hand, there have been encouraging signs about our capacity to deliver positive change at pace while dismantling some of the obstacles that could get in the way. We can begin to demonstrate that children's services are firmly established as a political and corporate priority and that good foundations are being laid. Again, this is tempered by realism about how far we need to travel.
25. The actions set out in the programme and the plan will ensure that arrangements for safeguarding children and complying with legislative requirements are robust and represent best practice. Delivering all the changes promptly and effectively will mean that,

at the earliest possible time, we can provide the people of Powys and external bodies 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.

26. We recognise that delivering the programme and the plan requires the Council to make this our top priority, not only in terms of work to improve children's services but also in taking corporate ownership of key responsibilities (in areas such as prevention, safeguarding, edge of care services, looked after children and leaving care services). The arrangements for accountability set out in this document and being put into effect demonstrate that the Leader, Cabinet members, the Chief Executive, the corporate management team, staff and partners accept a personal and collective responsibility for ensuring that change does happen and that good outcomes are achieved.

27. Since the inspection, extensive activity has taken place across the Council to secure greater compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards. There has been a rigorous process of self-assessment and we have listened to advice from a range of people who are experts in producing improvement in children's services experiencing severe difficulties. Consequently, Powys has developed a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development, further informed by the helpful recommendations made by the Inspectors and by the work of the Improvement Board. We have acted to:

- strengthen governance arrangements, including the introduction of a very strong independent Improvement Board which is chaired by a former local authority Chief Executive who has experience of leading a council where statutory intervention has been used;
- engage the council's whole extended leadership team in this work;
- recruit more social workers (going above establishment in front line teams) and creating additional capacity in areas such as Powys People Direct, the fostering and adoption services, quality assurance and business management;
- put in place highly experienced senior leadership for children's services and social services as a whole;

- develop plans for reshaping services with our partners;
- improve HR, IT and performance monitoring systems;
- use the expertise and knowledge available within the Improvement Board to support change, such as fieldwork practice and fostering; in key aspects of the improvement plan
- produce a financial plan that incorporates a safe and sustainable budget for children's services (Key Document 3);
- agree a Corporate Safeguarding Policy (Key Document 5), which sets out the steps that the Council as a whole will take to protect and safeguard children and adults at risk, and set up a Corporate Safeguarding Group chaired by the Chief Executive and including both the Cabinet member for Children Services (Key Document 6);
- demonstrate renewed commitment to engaging effectively with the Regional Safeguarding Board, the Regional Partnership Board, the Children and Young People's Partnership and structures for national working in areas such as fostering and adoption so that we can benefit more from partnership working and external accountability.

28. CSSIW undertook further monitoring activity in December. It focused on recent practice from August to December through case file reviews and discussions with front line operational staff. They found some early signs of improvement, some evidence of improved practice and many areas where the authority is putting in place new arrangements which have not yet had time to become embedded. They were still very concerned about the quality of operational practice, especially on the basis of their case file analysis. The Council received a letter summarising the findings on 4 January (see para11) and the conclusions have been addressed in this version of the improvement programme and plan. They seek to build on the strengths of our staff, whose resilience and professionalism in the face of many challenges CSSIW acknowledged in their report. However, it will include too the comprehensive programmes we are developing to improve practice at the frontline, especially in respect of safeguarding.

29. We acknowledge that effective and sustainable change will require far more time and effort. The following areas are seen as being major corporate priorities that must be pursued urgently.

- greater clarity about accountabilities for social services and recruiting a Director of Social Services as soon as possible;
- better engagement with children, young people and families to encourage co-production in service design and review;
- an improved offer to specific groups, such as young people leaving care and foster carers;
- more inquisitive and effective scrutiny by elected members;

30. At the same time, the Social Services Directorate will focus on using additional resources being placed in the budget this year and for 2018/19 to improve our capacity for:

- engaging the whole workforce in service redesign;
- facilitating professional development in areas such as implementing in full the Social Services and Well-being Act, specialisation, appointing practice champions, best practice seminars and links to institutions offering professional courses;
- dealing with issues around operational structures, workload management, staffing needs (including urgent recruitment and filling vacancies on a longer-term basis);
- adopting a far more robust approach to performance management, case auditing, quality assurance and supervision at team and practitioner levels; and
- revising processes, policies and procedures.

31. In addition to the revised programme and plan, we have been working to deliver actions set out in the initial plan and to provide a comprehensive set of related documents that describe the strands of work needed to underpin our drive for improvement. The following sections describe the progress made in the following areas: access; assessment; care and support; safeguarding; workforce; shaping and commissioning services; leadership, management and governance.

Access

32. To meet the need of children and families for a timely and proportionate early contact response, we have increased capacity in Powys People Direct, our contact and early screening centre. It both provides information, advice and assistance and also receives social services enquiries from the public and professionals. Recent concerns raised about people's ability to get access to PPD were addressed through a restructuring exercise. Supervision and support for contact officers have been increased and management oversight enhanced. The service has been re-located into county hall at Llandrindod Wells to meet more appropriately their accommodation requirements. Further work is planned in January to test the effectiveness of the systems now in use. We are making links with the Emergency Duty Team more robust while also reviewing how it operates in practice.
33. Consistent business processes and pathways (including an eligibility tool) support a triage approach; this ensures an appropriate referral pathway and enables early identification of safeguarding referrals. Consequently, urgent matters receive timely and effective responses. Post-referral communication with the enquirer has not always been carried out well enough. To address this issue, an automated referral receipt system is being developed which will describe for them how the matter is being progressed.
34. Comprehensive information on community support networks, including the third sector across Powys, is available through InfoEngine. This is an online database developed by the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO) and used widely across Wales. InfoEngine is used by Children's Services staff to share information with the public and it is freely available online for those seeking information, with active links from the Council's own website. Through PAVO, the Council has commissioned computer programmers to develop a link between InfoEngine and Dewis, the national well-being database, so that information from both systems is regularly shared and updated. This link should be available and 'live' in February 2018. Use made of both databases is monitored.
35. There is more work to be done in ensuring that all professionals understand and respect the role of Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) and their responsibility for it in changing the way families can interact with organisations at an early stage of their involvement. We have to build a culture which routinely meets the expectations of the Social Services and Well-being Act and other legislation which encourages an emphasis on co-production and reducing dependence.

Assessments

36. The service has focused strongly on assessments, with twice weekly meetings of operational managers to ensure timescales are met and performance improved. An independent auditor also reviewed a small number of files and suggested more appropriate timescales for completing assessments to ensure that they are more proportionate. We have started to measure performance against revised, more rigorous timescales. The data and other management information show an improving picture in respect of timeliness and quality but we will continue to prioritise this area for the foreseeable future to ensure that assessments are SMART, and provide good quality information from which to develop plans. We have also reviewed how we collect assessment data and agreed that, as PPD staff work do not complete full assessments but provide additional information for a referral, that their statistics will not be included in future. This will give managers a better understanding of performance issues.

Care and Support

37. Managers reviewed all children's case files to ensure that they all had up to date plans. All files have been reviewed and plans are in place. Children on care and support plans receive visits from their social worker and all looked after children are placed in appropriate regulated settings and are visited by their social workers. All children's cases are allocated to qualified social workers.

38. There are good examples of outcome-focused care planning which consistently reflects the outcomes of the assessment and the views of children and families. More families are becoming actively involved in planning and delivery of their care and support. They are supported to identify what matters to them and how they might achieve their personal well-being outcomes. These outcomes are clearly described and the actions to achieve them are identified. Assessment outcomes are pulled through from the assessment into the care and support plan. This enables a strengths-based approach and a focus on what matters to the individual.

39. Clearly, we need to ensure that this standard of work is delivered far more consistently and that staff consolidate the training they have received. We have too many cases where care and support plans are not set out in accordance with policy expectations. However, the Council has been prioritising investment in children's services and this enabling us to look again at how manageable

caseloads can be achieved. The introduction of set numbers for caseloads and investment in staff will enable a change in practice going forward. There is a requirement for management oversight in relation to signing off of care and support plans. This gives an additional opportunity for case discussion and quality assurance. Team management structures have been designed to ensure structured and timely oversight of decision-making in care planning and review processes but capacity issues have made this more problematic in some areas. Investment is being used to address these concerns and to secure additional Independent Reviewing Officer capacity and increased levels of independent advocacy.

40. The Council has also used this period to improve the accuracy of data and to support managers in addressing practice issues across the service. Detailed performance dashboards have been developed for front-line managers (updated daily) and for elected Members (updated weekly), based upon the model used in Swansea ([Key Document 7](#)). A weekly operational improvement meeting, with representatives from across the Council, focuses on actions to be completed and on removing any obstacles to good practice. The Interim Head of Service also meets weekly with Head of ICT and the Programme Officer to ensure good communication between the service and those support systems.
41. We have focused on timeliness issues in providing care and support services to children but this remains a priority. Through auditing, we have begun to examine the impact of these interventions to ensure that services deliver good outcomes. There is some evidence of improvement in this area but we recognise how much there is still to do in ensuring that standards are met consistently. Considerable work has been done in addressing problems within the in-house fostering service, partly caused by budget reductions, and this has been presented to the Improvement Board. We now have clear plans in place for significant investment. The Improvement Plan and the draft commissioning strategy ([Key Document 8](#)) set out a clear approach for reshaping services on a divisional, corporate and multi-agency basis.

Safeguarding

42. We have increased capacity in respect of IROs/Conference Chairs to meet current demand, especially to cater for the increase numbers of Looked After Children. A threshold tool, Quality Assurance Framework and auditing tool have been developed and

launched. Another full time auditor has been appointed on an interim basis, pending recruitment. The Interim Head of Service has re-established the Powys Local Operational Group which operates on a multi-agency basis to co-ordinate (at the local authority level) the work led by the Regional Safeguarding Board. The interim Director has met with the Chair of the Regional Safeguarding Board to instigate a more purposeful approach to the Council's relationship with and contribution to the Board. These overtures have met with a very positive response and offers of support.

43. The service itself is focusing on the basics - ensuring that assessments are completed, statutory visits made within timescales, Case Conferences and Looked After Children reviews held promptly, plans developed and communicated with the family to ensure the child is protected and avoiding drift plans. We are also increasing capacity in the safeguarding service and developing our edge of care services to ensure that needs can be met.
44. The service and partner agencies will be adopting over the coming year the "Signs of Safety" model successfully used in other Welsh local authorities and beyond for achieving improved management of risk and a greater emphasis on the family's strengths and potential for change. This is an approach which can be understood and acted upon at all levels within the Council and in collaboration with key stakeholders. We will provide training for staff and partner agencies before we roll it out fully. We have been in contact with other authorities to learn and benefit from their experience of the model. The Director of Social Services from Swansea has agreed to hold a masterclass/seminar in February to describe their improvement journey.

Workforce

45. We have recruited 45 agency staff to cover vacancies or longer-term sickness absence. On a temporary basis, we have appointed temporarily to a number of social worker posts above establishment in order to support staff, reduce caseloads and stabilise the workforce. As well as increasing social worker capacity in front line teams, the Council is also committing to provide additional support staff so that front line practitioners and managers can focus on delivering safe and high quality services to children and

their families. This includes strengthening the quality assurance functions (including Independent Reviewing Officers) and increasing capacity in Powys People Direct and the fostering and adoption services.

46. A workforce strategy (**Key Document 9**) will be presented to the Improvement Board in January. Having extra agency staff does increase capacity and experience within the workforce but, if workers change frequently, it can also add to instability for children and families. This too will affect the quality of support as so much of our work relies on relationships. Our priority is to stabilise the workforce as soon as possible. A stable and sizeable core of practitioners and managers, committed to working for Powys, is the key to delivering our statutory responsibilities for the benefit of the county's children and families.

47. We are committed to equipping staff with the skills they need and to ensuring that additional resources are provided in areas where we need to make most difference. In their recent fieldwork and monitoring exercise, CSSIW identified some positive steps and early improvements but noted that there is much more work required. As a result of this feedback, we will continue to focus on front line practice. The authority has appointed an experienced additional senior manager to add leadership capacity on behalf of the Head of service. The focus for this role will be to support practice in respect of assessments and in ensuring that:

- children's plans are 'SMART' and effective;
- visits are undertaken in accordance with the child's plan; and
- reviews are undertaken according to the relevant timescales.

Shaping and Commissioning Services

48. Many local authorities are experiencing difficulties in setting realistic budgets for children's services and in avoiding overspends at year end. There are some consistent features which make resource management especially challenging. Decisions which affect the type and cost of services to be provided are often outside of the council's control and may be unpredictable – for example, decisions taken by the court in child care cases. Some individual services are very expensive. Placements for children with especially complex needs can easily exceed £150,000 a year and some will cost substantially more. Expenditure incurred in one

year may lock the council into financial commitments for many years to come. To balance the competing priorities of managing service demand, improving quality, meeting higher expectations and reducing expenditure is especially problematic in situations where safeguarding children people from harm must be the key factor in decision-making. Additionally, there are many factors making the task even more difficult in recent years: increasing demand for services; new requirements from the Welsh and UK Governments; and the need to achieve budget savings in the face of reducing revenue.

49. Across Wales, social services have received a large measure of protection during austerity. Over the nine years from 2008/9 to 2016/7, council budgets have fallen by 10% in real terms (that is figures adjusted for inflation). Social services budgets have grown by 5% in real terms during the same period and remained stable over the last year in many local authorities. Thirteen of them did see reductions but Powys was by far the highest. The projected position for the service in Powys in 2017/18 is an overspend of £4.5m, on a net budget of £13.150m. The unachieved savings within Childrens remains at £1.1m. Within the Children with Disabilities residential establishments a saving of £556k remains a red rated risk. A further £388k in relation to partnership working with the Powys Teaching Health Board and third sector in respect of the new model for the delivery of Childrens Services has not been delivered nor are there plans in place to progress this saving. There numbers of Looked After Children are at a five-year high (206 children), with a 34 % increase in 2017/18 to date. Demand continues to grow, as does case complexity and use of external placements. The agreed extra package of Social Work support has cost £182k to date and this is forecast to rise as not all commitments are on the system. £3.7 million of pressures have been included within the Service's Financial Resources Model (FRM) is under consideration by Cabinet which is developing budget proposals for 2018/19 and for an ongoing five-year plan.
50. Our goal is to establish a safe and sustainable budget for children's services, using the approach set out in the following diagram.

A SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE BUDGET FOR SOCIAL SERVICES



51. Most of the component parts have been developed to the point where decisions about budget-setting can be made. We have been able to develop a shared understanding about the overall financial position within the authority, current and longer-term. The Council recognises the need for setting a realistic budget that will enable the Directorate to manage the current pattern of children's services and to fund improvements. The analysis required is nearing completion and it is being used to help set the Council's 2018/19 budget. There will be very substantial levels of increased investment in children's services. However, the Council will also want to see that the process of service change is more clear, more cogent, more urgent and better costed so that a sustainable budget can be achieved as soon as possible. We have worked to use this second iteration of the improvement programme and plan to fulfil that need. Work will focus on: fieldwork recruitment and retention; higher professional standards and salary progression; statements about new service models and what do good services look like; proposals for reshaping services to make them sustainable and deliver good outcomes.
52. It is important to differentiate between one-off and base budget pressures; this will help to identify both the need for and potential sources of additional funding. We have provided a convincing rationale for a different approach to managing resources in social services (prudent social care) in respect of patterns of spend, good fieldwork and management practice and improved management of risk (e.g. Signs of Safety). This is an approach which can be understood and acted upon at all levels within the Council and in collaboration with key stakeholders. Delegation of budgets within the service is not yet defined at an appropriate level. We need to ensure that decision-making is clearly aligned to financial accountability. Our Business Partners in Finance will continue to work with the service to ensure that managers have the necessary skills to fulfil their financial management and budget administration and budget management roles.
53. Our new approach to responsible and effective management of resources will be underpinned by a commissioning strategy which describes: how we will align the finances; what investment/reinvestment and disinvestment is required to reshape services; and what outcomes will be achieved in the short, medium and long-term. A draft commissioning strategy for children's services is nearly complete. It will look across the whole pathway - prevention and early intervention, front-door responses (such as the Information/Advice/Assistance Service), care and support services, edge of care/Integrated Family Support Services), care

placements; support to look after children and those leaving care. The Council is creating an Innovate to Save Fund to be used for underpinning this programme of change.

Leadership, Management and Governance

54. The service is demonstrably becoming a priority for the Council at both political and corporate levels. Senior officers and Members have shown a commitment to visiting social care teams and attending roadshows to hear directly from staff about the issues they face. A new focus on corporate parenting has helped to generate interest by elected Members and a willingness to be involved. Initial training has been provided to them and further training for senior officers and elected Members has been commissioned externally. Fortnightly briefings for the Leader, Cabinet member and acting Chief Executive are in place.
55. Children's services are increasingly able to call on the strength of a wide range of corporate support services and partnerships. We are seeking improvements across the whole Council to ensure that the service can deliver its duties. This includes changes in the way we all work together to support the delivery of front line services. The Improvement Board has been able to consider a comprehensive plan for improving corporate leadership and governance in the Council over the next three years (**Key Document 15**). To ensure that the Council is well-run, aspirational and high-performing, turning strategies into actions which make a difference for our communities, there is a significant volume of work required.
56. Change on such a scale means that the process will be neither quick nor linear. For change to be embedded, sustainable and genuinely owned by all, there has to be time built in to forge common purpose and enable new approaches. The experience of other organisations that have successfully transformed themselves from a similar position indicates that it takes some years to secure regeneration. However, a good start has been made in developing the Council's vision for the future which can be shared and understood by residents, staff and partners.
57. Recognised issues that we are seeking to address as a matter of urgency include the following.
- The Council had too often failed to tackle difficult issues adequately.

- A multiplicity of plans and performance management processes had led to unnecessary complexity and confusion nor have been followed through well enough.
- Savings and staff reductions in key areas had not been underpinned by a long-term strategic plan for the nature and shape of the Council;
- The Council needs to create a mutually supportive leadership culture.
- The Council's corporate centre should provide stronger, more enabling leadership.
- The Council faces very significant budget difficulties in the next few years and it does not yet have credible plans to meet these beyond 2018/19.
- The workforce as a whole needs to build confidence and become more willing engaged in processes of change.
- The Council should renew its approach to staff engagement to improve morale and to address issues around organisational culture.
- Performance management needs to be simplified and underpinned by accurate service and corporate data recording.
- Business support services must act consistently as positive enabling partners in change.
- While there are some good operational partnerships, improvement and rationalisation work should focus on ensuring that collaboration is focused on improvement priorities and securing impact from planned work programmes.

58. However, recent developments are beginning to secure a more positive environment for the support of children's services within key parts of the council and the directorate. There are now only two major improvement plans for social services, one for children and one for adults. The children services improvement programme and plan are long-term and ambitious, with commitments to delivering significant change at pace. In key areas, support services responsible for areas such as finance, ITC, performance management data, workforce planning and communications have become very active in helping to address known concerns. The Cabinet Member engages well with staff at all levels and has demonstrated considerable commitment and secured much support for the service, especially in respect of Corporate Parenting and Corporate Safeguarding. A series of engagement events with

elected members has delivered dividends in terms of increased awareness, information sharing and scrutiny. The Corporate Management Team routinely sets aside considerable amounts of time to consider children's services improvement issues.

59. There are still significant interim arrangements in place at senior and other levels of management. The interim Director took up this role in October 2017. He is committed to remaining with the Council while it goes through a second recruitment process for the post; it will be supported by a major recruitment consultancy and the timetable has been set. The interim Head of Children's Services is in place until the end of 2018 and we intend that his replacement will be appointed before autumn.
60. The Improvement Board has played a major role in providing additional accountability, challenge and support to the Council in tackling problems systematically and effectively. The Improvement programme and plan is considered at monthly Improvement Board meetings and through contact with the Improvement Board Members and discussion between Board meetings. The focus is on areas of priority and concern. Terms of reference and membership are available. Board members also undertake additional work in looking at key areas of service provision such as fostering to test out plans for improvement and to provide groups of staff with opportunities to engage.
61. Working relationships with key partner organisations have been affected by a period when the Council rather lost its way in delivery of its social services functions. However, these are fundamentally sound and we are being well supported by them in implementing strategic plans. In line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act, the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) provides cross sector leadership through a shared commitment to providing seamless and integrated health and social care services for children, young people and adults living in Powys, with a primary emphasis on prevention and early intervention. The Area Plan is also set to identify which services will receive greatest priority in achieving integrated working on behalf of young carers, Integrated Family Support Services and children with complex needs due to disability or illness. The Health and Care Strategy ([Key Document 11](#)), developed with Powys Teaching Health Board, is developing significant momentum.
62. These are early days in the improvement process; many challenges remain. Sustained progress needs to be made in order to restore confidence in the Council's ability to stay the course. Stability in all the leadership teams within the Social Services Directorate is a prerequisite for delivering the longer-term actions outlined in the Improvement Plan. Current structures are heavily

dependent on interim arrangements. Dispersed leadership down to senior practitioner level has been an asset but managers are under significant pressure to reconcile competing priorities and we need to do more to ensure that they understand the new approaches that are being developed at considerable pace. The renewed emphasis on integrated working in our partnership with the Powys Training Health Board must be sustained through an active and purposeful Regional Partnership Board. Above all, the Council has to maintain its commitment to prioritising social services so that children and families are kept as safe as possible and supported in their efforts to achieve good outcomes.

Challenge Version 1

How we will improve

Producing an effective improvement programme and plan

63. The most immediate task has been to produce a second iteration of our improvement programme and plan that is comprehensive enough, radical enough and compelling enough to provide direction for our all efforts in times of considerable challenge. This is regarded as a crucial activity for the Council and its partners. It must ensure that, as a matter of urgency, realistic reassurance can be provided to key stakeholders about our ability to:

- fulfil our statutory responsibilities;
- reshape the current pattern of services so that they are better equipped for responding to the needs of children and families.

64. We are working from a relatively low baseline and we have considerable ground to make up. Concerns have been expressed about the capacity of the Council to lead this process of considerable change at sufficient pace, given the levels of staffing instability at the front-line and in management positions and the need to focus on overseeing real progress in improving professional practice. Also, there has been no established track record for the priority commitment to children's services and plans which is needed to generate sustainable and embedded reform.

65. Some of these factors will take time to rectify but we have demonstrated collectively an improved ability to harnessing the resources of the Council, our staff and our partnerships in pursuit of positive change. In recent months, Children's Services have been the major priority for the Council at both political and corporate levels. We are able increasingly to call on support from corporate services and partnerships. In areas such as finance, ITC, performance management data, workforce planning and communications, there has been a willingness to address known concerns. As stated earlier, the Improvement Board has played a major role in providing additional accountability, challenge and support to the Council in tackling problems systematically and effectively.

66. These are early days in the improvement process; many challenges remain. Sustained progress needs to be made in order to restore confidence in the Council's ability to stay the course. A credible improvement programme and plan will help to ensure a coherent direction

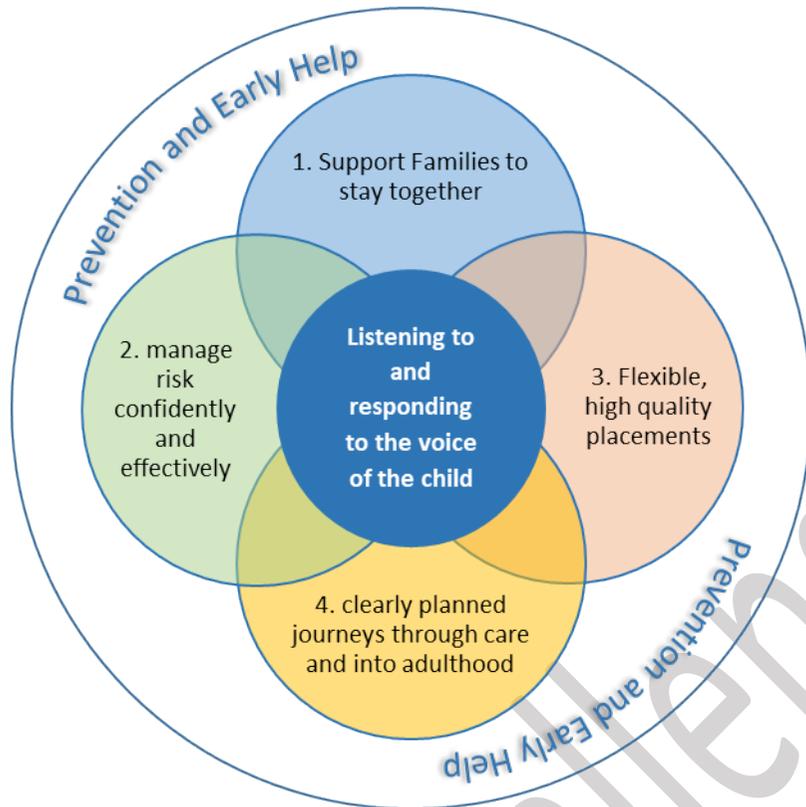
for change over the next three years. As Inspectors have reminded us, these actions must be: specific and clear; sufficient; realistic; and timely and attributed to people who have the capacity and competency to deliver what is required;

67. The first iteration was produced very quickly but Inspectors judged it as having some real merits. However, there were flaws. The focus was on short-term actions in a plan that aspired to cover a three-year period. The required improvement in service capacity, capability and governance was seen to be a longer-term process, hence the need to address prioritisation and to ensure that timescales reflected this approach. An outline of longer-term strategic planning was required. Some of the 'actions' were seeking to address complex areas of work and required a detailed plan in themselves; CSSIW wanted to understand the detailed actions we are proposing to take and how this work is being co-ordinated. The plan was regarded as having insufficient emphasis on the importance of developing corporate parenting and the role of scrutiny committees, so that members are fully aware of their responsibilities and can challenge effectively. Inspectors were particularly interested in the actions to provide additional resources, management support, learning and development to front line staff "because the time and effort to achieve the required shift in process and culture across staff teams should not be underestimated." There was concern that the plan did not outline work with peer authorities in developing solutions.
68. In response to this analysis, we have provided a new action plan for the overall improvement programme. It concentrates on four Priority Improvement Areas: Corporate Parenting, Leadership and Governance; Case Management, Practice and Quality Assurance; Workforce; Partnership, Models of Care and Service Reshaping. Some of the sections deal primarily with the recommendations in the inspection report and with actions where we anticipate that the Council and Children's Services can act quickly to deliver many of the changes required. Others focus on a partnership approach to reshaping over a longer period the pattern of services for children, young people and their families.

'What good looks like' – our key improvement aims

69. To ensure that the overall programme remains coherent and relevant, a set of key improvement aims and principles have been developed ([Key Document 16](#)). The major emphasis is on helping the Council, our partners, inspectors, reviewers, auditors, advocates and families to reassure themselves 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. By describing “What does good look like?”, the checklist provides one of the tools that can help us to engage in effective scrutiny, peer review and operational improvement.



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.

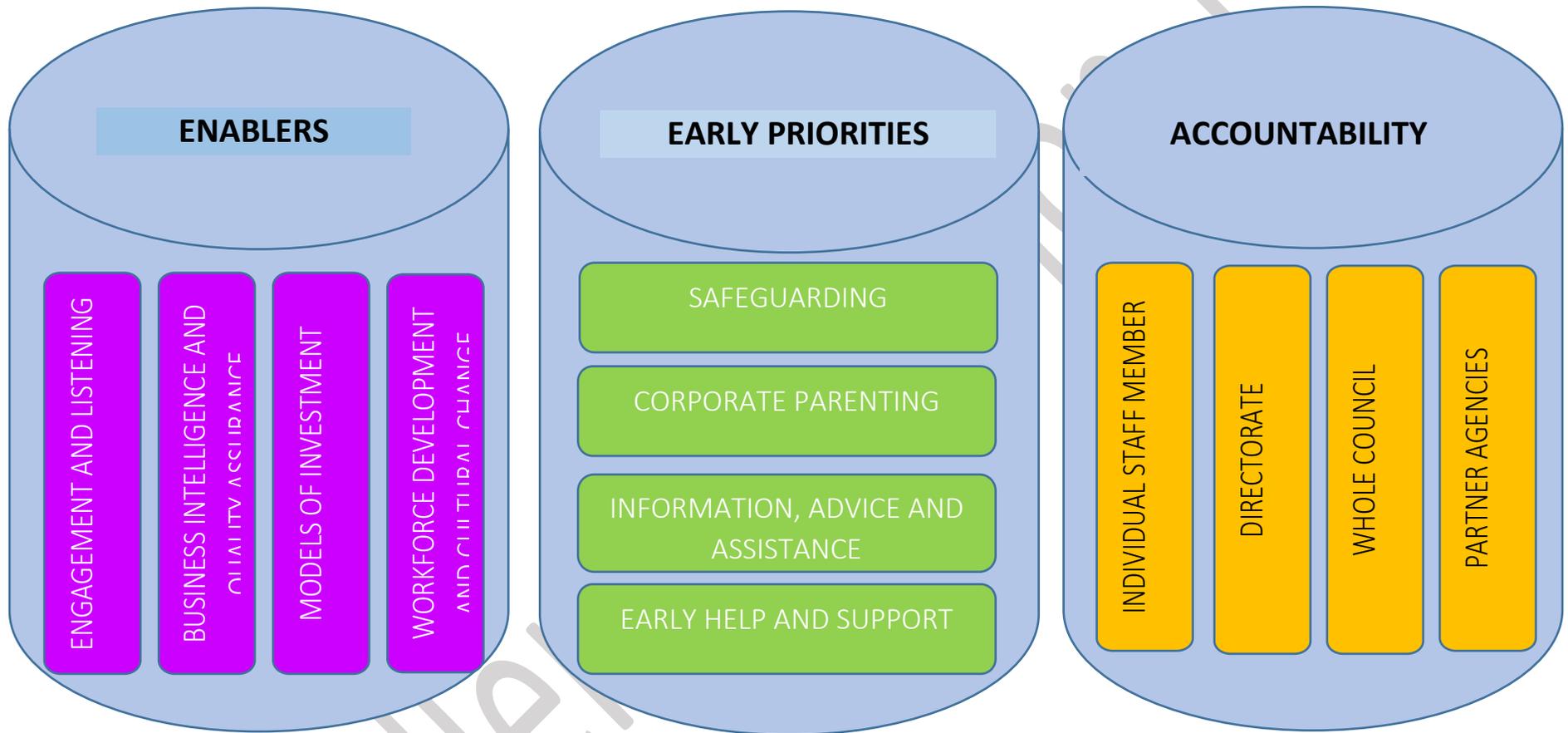
70. These aims are underpinned by the following commissioning principles:

- 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.
- Most children are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families.

- Preventative services and early help to support children in need and their families should be provided in ways that give them every chance to stay together.
- 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.
- 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.
- Multi-agency arrangements to assessing and managing risk to vulnerable children and young people need to be robust.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.
- 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.
- 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.
- Placements should support a positive transition to independence, adulthood, education, employment, and training and, where applicable, resettlement back into the community from custodial settings.

Our Improvement Model

71. This document sets out the Powys Children's Services Improvement Strategy for 2018-2021. We anticipate that the plan will continue to be developed based on feedback from: children and young people; parents and carers, staff, external review, audit and challenge.
72. The overall strategic direction is supported by an improvement plan and by strategies for priority areas. It will form the basis for a three-year programme of change. Both immediate and longer-term actions are described within the plan, the former in greater detail because this is where changes are needed most urgently. More time is needed for us to be sure about what needs to be done if we are to deliver larger-scale, sustainable reform. Delivering all the changes promptly and effectively will mean that, at the earliest possible time, we can provide the people of Powys 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.
73. In order to achieve our key improvement aims and implement our service delivery model, the following whole system improvement model has been developed. Our model for improvement is based on three key pillars:
- **Early Priorities for Action** – as the core focus for our immediate improvement plan alongside the areas identified in the inspection report.
 - **Enablers** – the cross-cutting activity that will support implementation and ensure we meet our priorities for action.
 - **Accountability** – to ensure that all parts of our organisation and our partners are clear about the role they will play in supporting our improvement journey.



EARLY PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding the children and young people of Powys is our highest priority. We will work as a service, corporately and with our partners and communities to ensure that we all have a shared understanding and collective approach to safeguarding our children and young people. We will achieve this through:

- embedding the Regional threshold document to create a shared understanding of levels of need and the safeguarding process;
- implementing the Signs of Safety model as a shared and robust risk assessment and management tool;
- ensuring assessments are carried out within statutory timescales and that robust, outcome-focused child protection plans are put in place;
- providing joint workforce development and training across all agencies.

CORPORATE PARENTING

As corporate parents, we will care for our most vulnerable children, work with them to develop clear and planned journeys through care and aspire for their future wellbeing and achievement - as all parents should. This will be achieved by:

- ensuring we have high quality placements within which our looked after children can be safe, cared for, feel part of a community and have their individual needs met;
- ensuring we are able to support our looked after children in their educational and vocational attainment so that they fulfil their potential;
- ensuring our children and young people are supported to have their voices heard and that they are able to influence and shape what happens in their lives;
- developing clear, multi-agency pathways for our care leavers to ensure they have the support they need as they grow into adulthood and can aspire for bright futures;
- providing opportunities for our care leavers to work and train within the 'company firm' (i.e. the Council and partner agencies).

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

We will continue to build community and universal service capacity to identify additional needs early and provide information, advice and assistance to children, young people and families. By providing young people and families with information and signposting to community level support, we will empower them to make informed choices and build their own resilience. This will be done through:

- Re-building and maintaining our Family Information Service (Information and Advice) functions within Powys People Direct (PPD);
- Providing Family Information Service outreach to local communities including marketing of the Family Information Service and PPD;

- Providing Youth Information Services directly to young people;
- Connecting community level organisations through the local networks and the social value forum so they are better informed and able to support families;
- Providing multi-agency workforce development and training opportunities for staff from community and universal services.

EARLY HELP AND SUPPORT

We will develop multi-agency early help capacity and capability across the whole continuum of need to ensure that children, young people and families with additional needs are identified and supported as early as possible in order to prevent escalation. Through our multi-agency **Start Well Programme**, we will continue to build on the Team Around the Family model and develop systems, processes and services that ensure all children, young people and families with additional care and support needs receive a proportionate and effective response that will help them to build on their own strengths, focus on what matters to them and develop their resilience. This will be achieved through:

- developing PPD into a multi-agency hub to include a clear Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) and Early Help offer;
- ensuring children, young people and families in need of care and support are supported to **co-produce** outcomes-focused care and support Plans;
- redesigning services in order to strengthen and build the preventative and early help offer to families with more complex needs, including those children and young people at the 'edge of care';
- commissioning a range of integrated support services for children, young people and their families to provide additional capacity and complementary support to the statutory service offer;
- reviewing and refreshing the evidence-based intervention framework to develop 'include' interventions and support at a statutory/care and support level.
- developing locality multi-agency teams with integrated practice and management in respect of children with additional needs because of disability.

ENABLERS

ENGAGEMENT AND LISTENING

We will ensure that children, young people and their families have their voices heard and acted on at an individual, service and strategic level. We will develop a renewed commitment across the organisation and its partners to delivering our duties under Annex B of the Wellbeing of future Generations Act. In doing so we will ensure that individual support plans are co-produced and focus on 'what matters' to the individual as well as ensuring service user voice informs service design and policy development. We will achieve this by:

- implementing the 'What matters to me' booklet to facilitate children's and young people's engagement in their own care and support planning and review
- work towards embedding the national Children's Rights approach – 'The Right Way';
- providing and enhancing the National Approach to Advocacy and the 'active offer,' for all our looked after children;
- Adopting the new National Participation Charter as a whole organisation to demonstrate our commitment to meeting the participation Standards
- achieving the National Participation Standards Kitemark as a whole service and encouraging our partners to do so;
- working with our County Youth Forum, Junior Safeguarding Board, Junior Corporate parenting group and other interest groups to ensure that children and young people are supported to influence service and policy development and design;
- adopt person-centred planning techniques and approaches, in line with our education partners, to ensure that our care and support plans are outcomes-focused;
- robustly examining care and support plans in relation to the voice of the child/young person through our quality assurance processes.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Relevant, timely, accurate data and business intelligence are critical for the safe and effective operation of our service as well as informing our overall service design and commissioning. By improving the robustness of our data and the ways in which we engage with and analyse that data, we will be able to deploy resources more effectively, manage performance and ensure our service is fit for purpose, meeting the needs of those we support. We will achieve this by:

- Creating robust data collection, reporting and analysis process that will enable us to:
 - effectively measure, manage and evaluate services;
 - direct strategic plans and policy by understanding why things have, or are likely to change;
 - provide robust information to stakeholders,

- Improving staff and member access to relevant data and business information e.g. through electronic dashboards
- Developing a programme to facilitate improved staff and member engagement with business intelligence and data to include regular briefing and training opportunities.
- Implementing a new and robust quality assurance framework across the service to include data quality reporting, staff supervision and support, thematic audit.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL CHANGE

We will ensure that our workforce has the appropriate skills, resources and tools they need to be able to demonstrate excellent practice and best support and safeguard our children, young people and families. To support this, we will create a service culture which is child/young person centered, outcomes-focused, collaborative, open and transparent. We will also build an effective team and service culture which will help us recruit and retain excellent staff. We will achieve this by;

- implementing person centered planning approaches and providing training and support to staff;
- developing a strong ethos of public service and good customer service;

- developing reflective practice forums;
- providing a rolling programme of training and development based on training needs analysis against our agreed service delivery models and interventions framework;
- supporting staff to access ILM training to develop leadership capacity across the service;
- supporting staff to access coaching and/or develop their own coaching capacity in order to build a supportive culture within the service;
- managing talent and supporting our best practitioners to develop and grow within the service.

MODELS OF INVESTMENT

By changing our service models, we will invest resources 'upstream' in early help and prevention with a view to supporting families to safely stay together and reduce the need for costly care placements. We will do this by:

- maximising the opportunities provided through Welsh Government grants, aligning resources from a range of grants and agencies to a single 'early help' strategy ([Key Document 12](#));
- redesigning statutory services to allow for 'early help' and prevention capacity to be protected and maximized;
- developing opportunities for integrated and collaborative working across partner agencies which will create efficiency and release resources for re-investment in early help and prevention;
- following robust commissioning principles in service development and design to ensure that they are both effective and efficient.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Individual Staff

We will ensure that each staff member is confident and competent in undertaking their duties and supported to demonstrate excellent practice. We will also ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibility within their own individual caseload, their team, the service, the Council

and with partners. Furthermore, we will ensure that they are clear about their responsibility in addressing and/or escalating risks in relation to both families and the service. We will achieve this by:

- ensuring staff have robust supervision and support, including personal development priorities/plans;
- ensuring staff are engaged and connected with the service and wider council through effective communication mechanisms including team meetings, service newsletters and roadshows;
- reviewing and actively communicating our service policies and procedures;
- providing time and space for reflective practice – both individually and collectively;
- monitoring individual performance and quality assuring work undertaken;
- ensuring staff are actively listening and responding to the views of children, young people and families.

Social Service Directorate

As a Service, we will ensure that our staff are supported to deliver excellent practice and that our services are fit for purpose. We will do this by:

- providing clear leadership and direction for staff;
- ensuring sufficient resources are allocated in line with the needs of services users and that high quality services are effectively developed and commissioned;
- ensuring caseloads are maintained at a safe and appropriate level;
- ensuring we take a proactive approach to recruiting and retaining staff across the service;
- effectively managing and monitoring the resources available to the service and actively seeking opportunities for external funding;
- actively monitoring quality of practice and service performance, taking steps to improve and enhance performance where necessary;
- developing a service delivery culture that is outcomes-focused and person-centred and where we listen and respond to the voices of children, young people and families.

Whole Council

As a Council, we will ensure that our Children's Service department maintains a priority status and that it is supported by a whole council approach.

We will do this by:

- developing a strong and sustained culture of good customer service, both internally and externally;
- providing supportive challenge and scrutiny to our Children's Services department to help implement and sustain improvements;
- ensuring our Children's Service's department is appropriately resourced;
- securing a responsive and robust support infrastructure for Children's services to include HR, ICT, Finance, Legal, Business Intelligence;
- ensuring all staff and members understand their role and responsibility in safeguarding children and supporting our looked after children as corporate parents;
- ensuring we engage with and listen to the views of children and young people in our work to develop strategy and policy and fully assessing and understanding the impacts of decisions on the lives of children, young people and families.

Partner Agencies

We will work closely with our partners to develop holistic, multi-agency approaches to identifying, assessing and responding to the needs of children and families. We will do this by:

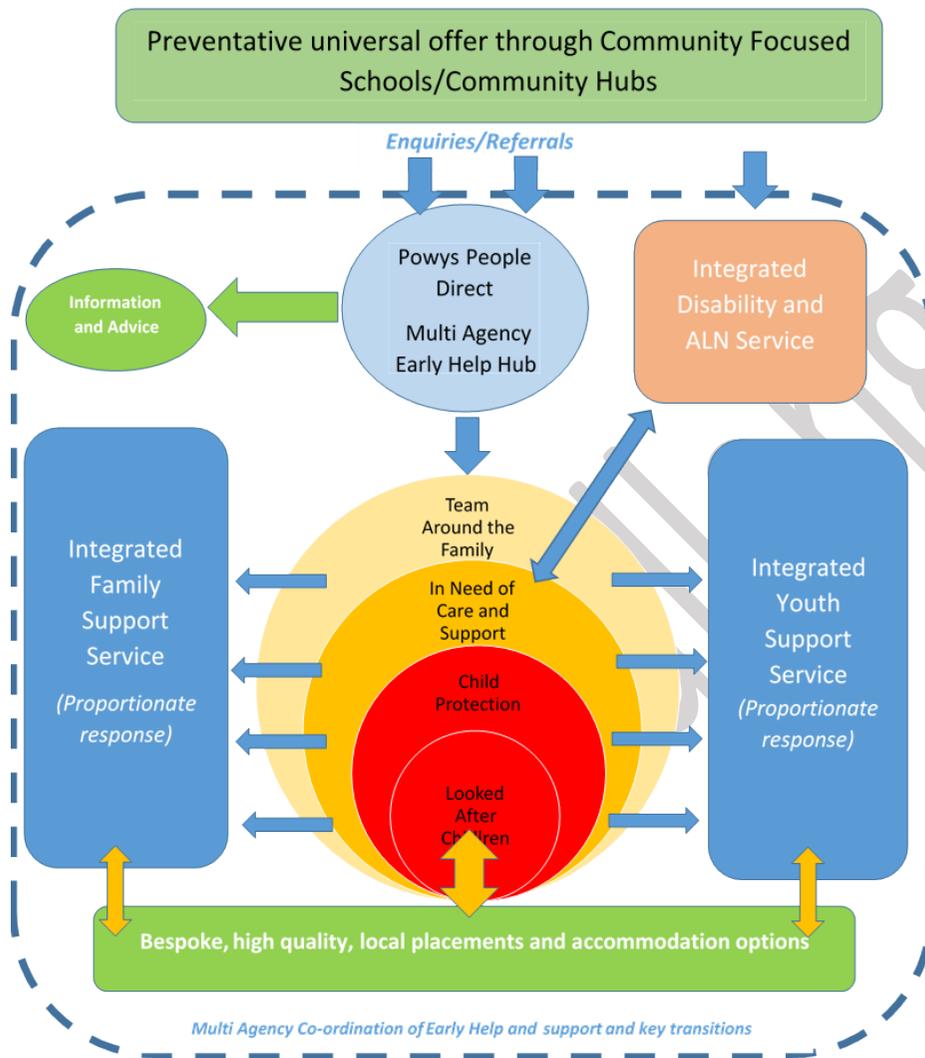
- providing a clear, shared vision and strategy for children and families in Powys that all partners agencies and their staff can recognise, own and support;
- safely and effectively sharing information;
- working to integrate teams and services in order to provide seamless responses to children, young people and families;
- identifying opportunities for pooling and sharing resources;
- assessing, monitoring and reviewing population needs using agreed performance and outcome indicators;
- having a collective understanding of our roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children and young people.

Partnership Working

74. Better working relationships with key partner organisations and with bodies such as the Children and Young people Partnership and the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board are helping us to deliver change, to push forward with plans for service reshaping and to agree ways for delivering on our early priorities (Key Document 13). Other local authorities and national bodies such as ADSS Cymru and the WLGA have been in the forefront of offering support.

75. In 2017, Powys Regional Partnership Board (PRP) developed and launched the Health and Care Strategy 2017-2027. It sets out the county's vision for integrated health and care support/services and provides a 'roadmap' for service transformation. The statutory Area Plan, as required under the Social Services and Well-being Act, will set out the programme for delivery in the first three years. The strategy adopts a 'whole life, whole system' approach to change. It groups the population and strategic priorities into three life phases, each of which has a multi-agency partnership group to lead and oversee implementation: *Start Well* (0 – 25 years); *Live Well*; and *Age Well*.

Fig 4



76. The newly re-launched Children and Young Peoples Partnership (CYPP) reports to the RPB in respect of its work on the Start Well programme. It will have a primary focus on Early Help and Prevention, in particular on preventing and/or reducing the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The figure below shows an outline of the next phase which involves working across the whole continuum of need while continuing to build capacity at a universal and community level.

➤ To develop Powys People Direct (PPD) into a multi-agency hub to include a clear

Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) and Early Help offer and to provide a coherent, proportionate, multi-agency response to need - every referral will have a response.

- Build on work to date and strengthen the early help offer to families with more complex needs requiring Care and Support plans.
- Build preventative capacity across the continuum of need in particular for those children and young people at the 'edge of care.'
- Commission a range of integrated support services for children, young people and their families to provide additional capacity and complementary support to the offer made by statutory services including. ;
 - **Family support** – early help through to edge of care
 - **Youth Support** – including emotional support, skills development, and engagement
 - **Disability** – co-ordinated multi-agency responses
- Review and refresh the evidence-based intervention framework to include interventions and support at a statutory/care and support level.
- Develop locality multi-agency teams with integrated practice and management.
- Develop/commission a range of local, flexible, needs-appropriate placement and accommodation options for children and young people
- Improve learner outcomes (particularly at Key Stage 4), especially for vulnerable learners.

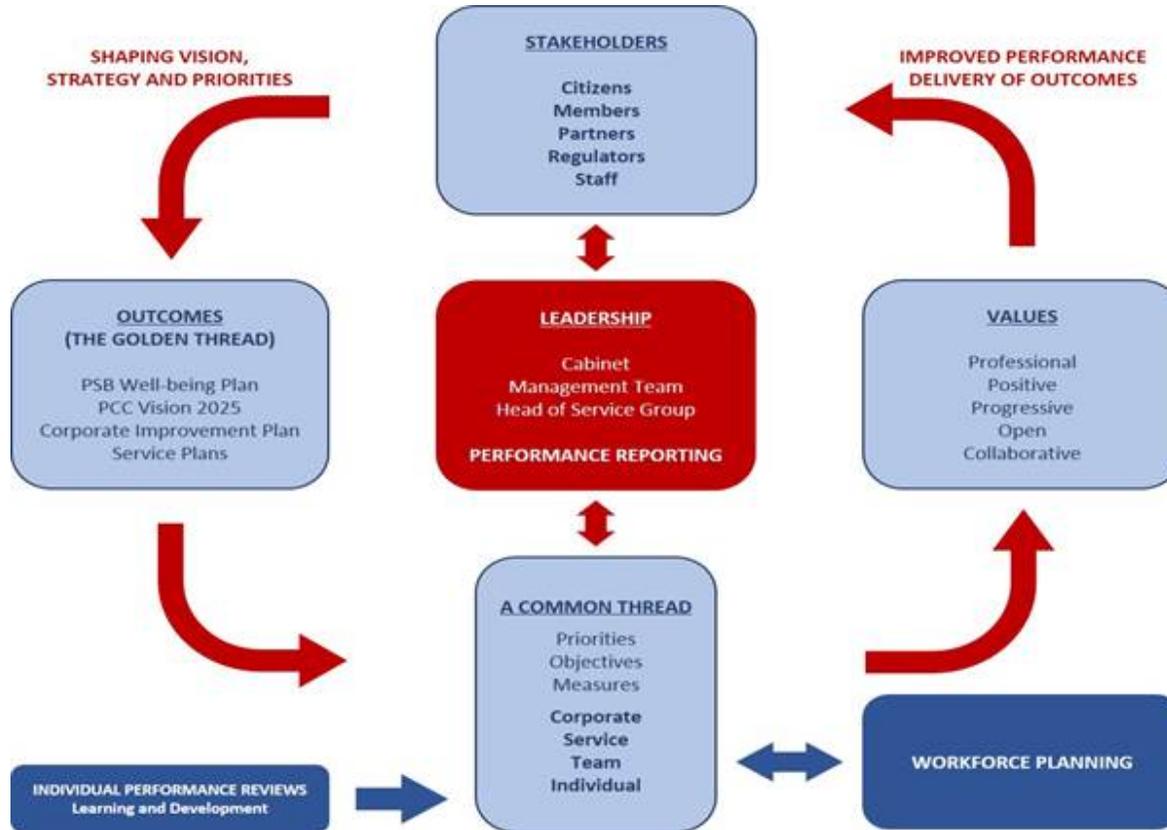
Governance

75. Both Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees will routinely monitor progress and provide leadership for the changes that need to be made. We will use also the full range of performance management, corporate planning and partnership frameworks available within the Council to maintain

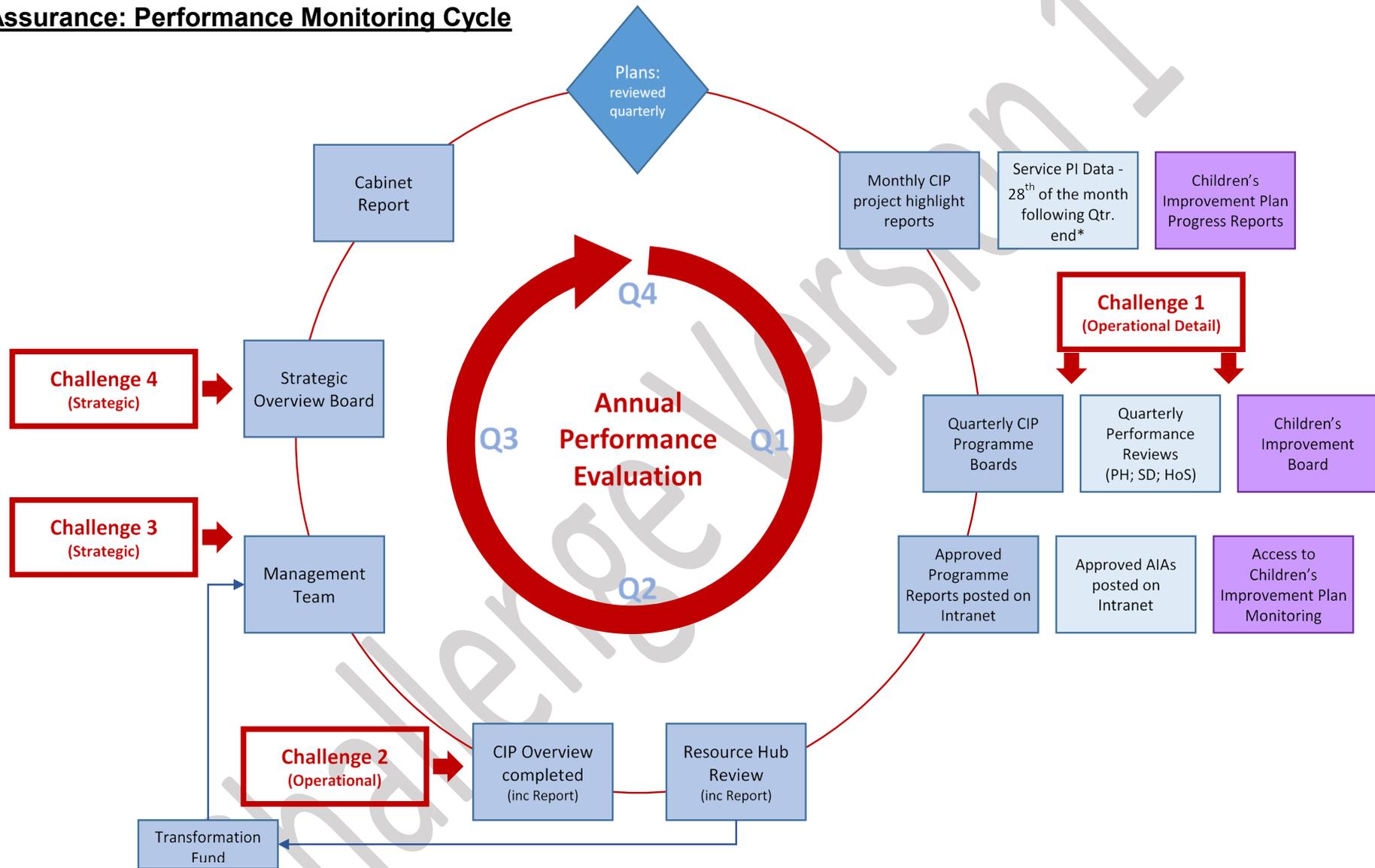
effective corporate oversight of the improvement programme and plan. Some of these are set out below. The Improvement Board performance report (**Key Document 10**) will provide regular, up to date, accurate performance data for board members. The performance report provides key headline data including;

Performance Management Framework

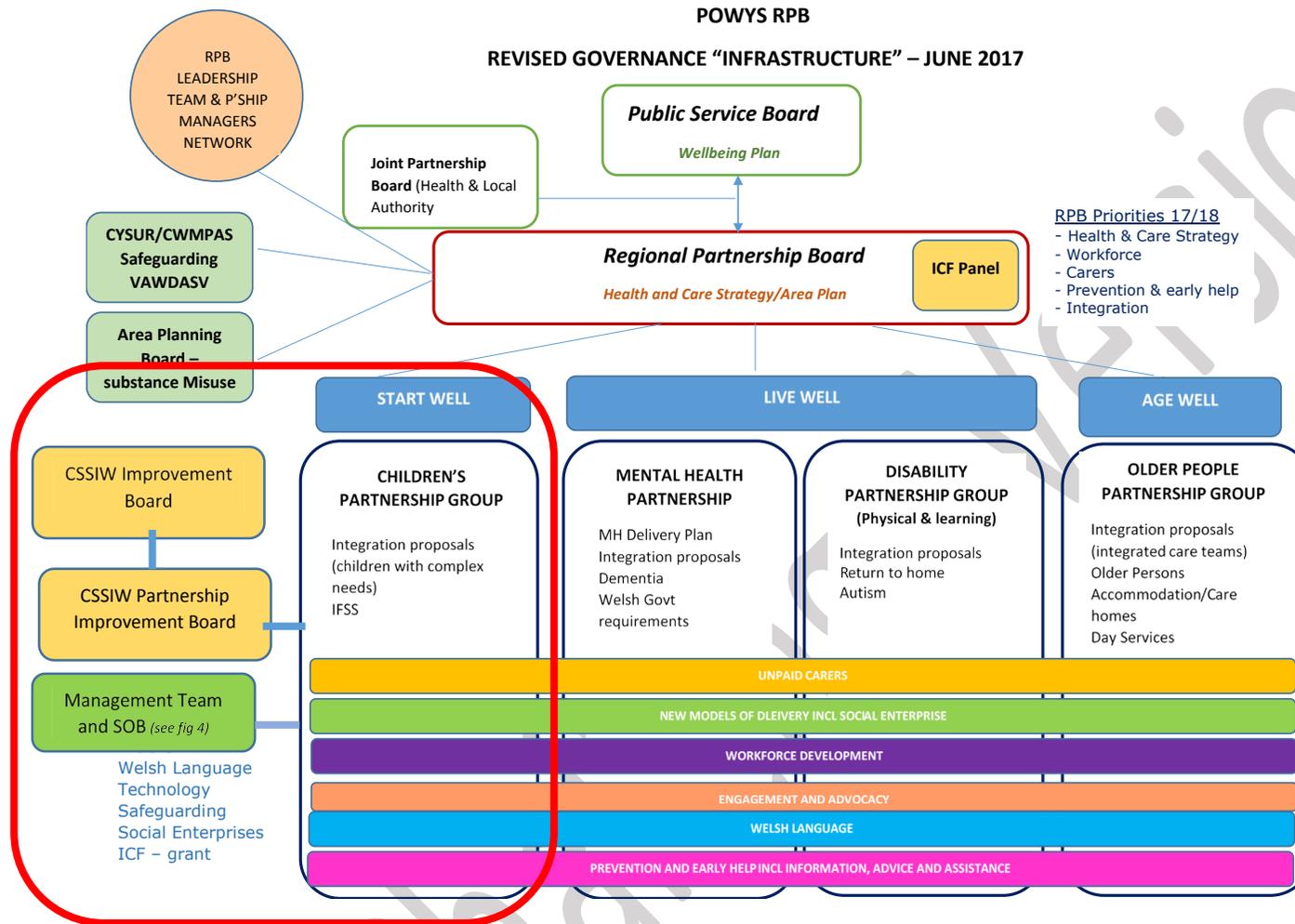
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Assurance: Performance Monitoring Cycle



Partnership Framework



77. The Powys County Council Improvement Board has been established under the powers contained in the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act. The Minister for Social Services has determined that the Board will be chaired by Jack Straw (former local authority Chief

Executive). Its membership is independent of the Council. It includes Phil Hodgson (former Director of Social Services), Geoff Burrows (former Portfolio Holder in another Local authority) and Rachel Thomas (Head of Policy and Public Affairs at the office of the Children's Commissioner. 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 participation by the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, the Chief Executive, the Statutory Director of Social Services, the Director of Education and Children, the Head of Children's Services, plus any other officers or partners who are needed to assist with any given item. The Board convenes at least once a month, with support activities spread over approximately three days. Activities will include 1-to-1 meetings with key staff and politicians, formal Board Meeting and engagement activity with staff at all levels.

78. The Improvement Board:

- ensures production of a Children's Social Services Improvement Plan and Corporate Leadership and Governance Plan as directed by the Minister and in line with CSSIW expectations;
- monitors, scrutinises and challenges to ensure the timely delivery of actions identified in the Improvement Plan;
- holds the Council to account for delivering the broad spectrum of required improvement and escalate in the event of non-compliance;
- engages with staff at all levels to facilitate delivery of improvement and raise awareness of this work; and
- keeps external bodies such as Welsh Government, CSSIW and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), informed about progress.

79. As part of the improvement process, it is essential to identify, analyse and prioritise risks to ensure that these risks are managed effectively. There are significant risks to the Improvement Plan, including the Council's ability to deliver sustainable resourcing and workforce strategies. A programme risk register is maintained by the Programme Manager and reported to the Improvement Board.

Key Documents and Links

Key Document 1	CSSIW Inspection Report October 2017
Key Document 2	Improvement Board terms of reference and membership
Key Document 3	Powys County Council: A Safe and Sustainable Budget for Children's Services 2018
Key Document 4	Powys County Council: Role and responsibilities of the Director of Social Services, the Director of Education and Children and the Lead Director for Children and Young People
Key Document 5	Powys County Council Corporate Safeguarding Policy
Key Document 6	Powys County Council Corporate Safeguarding Group - terms of reference
Key Document 7	Performance Management dashboards for Children's Services
Key Document 8	Powys County Council Commissioning Strategy -
Key Document 9	Powys County Council Workforce Plan for Children's Services
Key Document 10	Powys County Council Reshaping Services for Children who need Care and Support – Commissioning Strategy (in draft)
Key Document 11	Health and Care Strategy 2017-2027
Key Document 12	Developing a co-ordinated, multi-agency 'Prevention and Early Help' offer for Powys 2017-2025
Key Document 13	CYSUR: The Mid & West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board – 'The Right Help at the Right Time for Children, Young People and their Families': Regional Thresholds & Eligibility for Support Document
Key Document 14	Powys County Council Children's Services 2017-2020 Improvement Plan

Key Document 15	Powys County Council Corporate Leadership & Governance Plan - "Making It Happen"
Key Document 16	Powys County Council Reshaping Services for Children who need Care and Support: Key Improvement Aims, Principles and Shared Commitments

Challenge Version 1