

**POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL
SAFEGUARDING
IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017**

Version 2.0

Version Control

Version	Update	By Whom
1.4	First working draft	by Children's Services SMT
2.0	Second working draft	additions from Partners

Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to set out the Safeguarding Children Improvement Plan for 2017. It will continue to evolve based on feedback from staff, children and young people, parents and carers, external review, audit and challenge. The strategic plan is supported by a number of action plans for each of the priority areas.

1. 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
- quality of professional practice.

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, Children's Services and partnerships since June 2017 to secure compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards. Powys has developed a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development, informed by the helpful recommendations made by the Inspectors. There is a commitment at all levels 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.

Children and young people in our society 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 the 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, a local authority must 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. This is the context in which Powys has sought to provide an improvement plan which will be effective in delivering the following aims and objectives.

A set of key aims and objectives 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 their current strategy. It will provide one of the tools that can help them us to engage in effective scrutiny, peer review and operational improvement. The major emphasis is on helping local authorities, their partners, inspectors, reviewers and auditors to reassure themselves that the programme of change set out in this plan is having a timely and significant influence on the outcomes for children and young people in a specific area.

KEY AIMS

1. **To support families to stay together** and reduce the need for children to be looked after, by focusing on services which intervene early and prevent greater need arising.
2. **To manage risk confidently and effectively when providing support to families where children and young people at the 'edge of care'** by making sure that need is accurately assessed, resulting in the right children being accommodated at the right time. This includes supporting families to avoid children becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks.
3. **To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements** which meet the diverse range of children's needs.
4. **To give children 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 objectives:

- 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. The majority of 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.

2. How the Plan has been developed

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 the effectiveness of these to be inadequate. The regulatory findings and 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 taken action in priority areas also highlighted by CSSIW to ensure children's safety. We have strengthened governance arrangements including the introduction of a multi-agency Improvement Board. We have recruited experienced senior leadership for Children's Services. We have engaged the council's whole extended leadership team in this priority work. We have recruited more skilled and experienced social workers. We must build on this work, 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.

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 will improve the lives of our children and young people.

During our improvement journey we will have an open and positive dialogue with our children and young people, those who care for them, our partners and our frontline staff in order to make the improvements needed and ensure a sustainable journey of improvement.

Progress towards delivering the actions set out in the Improvement Plan will be updated on a quarterly basis.

The first draft Improvement Plan for August 2017 focused on the recommendations from the draft inspection report. It included also the recommendations and areas for further consideration identified by the Escalation Plan developed earlier in the year and actions identified at the Roadshows in the summer of 2017.

Achieving the necessary improvements is dependent on all agencies concerned with protecting and improving outcomes for children and young people working together. This plan is therefore a multi-agency Improvement Plan which we will share and develop with all key agencies.

Following development of the Escalation Plan, we focused on how to move forward in ways that will guarantee that:

- the Children and Young People's Partnership has the leadership, culture, values and behaviour needed;
- best practice is consistent in all areas of frontline services;
- resources support good practice and improved outcomes for children and young people
- professional awareness, informed by listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people, drives improvements.

These shared priorities will be used to underpin change initiatives across the partnership and there is an Improvement Board accountable for ensuring that all elements of the Improvement Plan are met.

3. 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. Powys 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 the disappearance of most large manufacturing employers. 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. The vulnerability profile demonstrates the current level of need in Powys from targeted to specialist services.

Action Taken So Far

The first draft Improvement Plan for August 2017, whilst focusing on the recommendations from the original inspection report in 2017, also includes the recommendations and areas for further consideration identified by the Escalation Plan developed earlier in the year and actions identified at the Roadshows in summer of 2017.

Achieving the necessary improvements is dependent on all agencies concerned with protecting and improving outcomes for children and young people working together. This plan is therefore a multi-agency Improvement Plan which we will share and develop with all key agencies.

Powys has made some progress in improving arrangements to protect children since June 2017. Senior and frontline staffing arrangements are now more secure. Extensive activity has taken place to drive improvement across Children's Services and, whilst progress has been slow in some areas, improvement has been made in regards to compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards. Powys has an understanding of its strengths and areas for development, and there is commitment at all levels to continuing improvement in order to give the best service to children and families.

Following the development of the Escalation Plan we focused on:

- the leadership, culture, values & behaviour of the partnership ensure 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.

These shared priorities will be used to drive change across the partnership and the Improvement Board will be accountable for ensuring that all elements of the Improvement Plan are met.

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. The plan is supported by a number of action plans for each of the four priority areas.

Governance

The strategic partnership boards responsible for safeguarding children and young people in Powys are the Powys Local Operational Group (PLOG), 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
- governance, accountability and coordination arrangements

The **Improvement Board** will monitor, challenge and ensure sustainable improvement across the service and partnership, ensuring that the requirements set out in the CSSIW Report are met and that children and young people in Powys are safeguarded. The Board is overseen by the Powys County Council Cabinet and Partnerships.

The **Regional Safeguarding Board** is chaired by the Regional Chair, meeting quarterly and works in partnership with 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 a number of 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 with regard to improving the health, education, employment, training and housing outcomes for children and young people Looked After.

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- 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 Improvement Board will monitor, challenge and ensure sustainable improvement across the service and partnership, ensuring that the requirements set out in the CSSIW Inspection Report are met and that children and young people in Powys are safeguarded. The Board is overseen by the Powys County Council Cabinet and Partnerships.

The **Regional Safeguarding Board** is chaired by the Regional Chair, meeting quarterly and works in partnership with 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 a number of sub-groups that progress separate work streams of the PLOG Business plan.

Progress So Far

Considerable external review of children's social care intervention and audit activity has taken place in the last year. There has been a review of efficiencies. The escalation plan developed in early summer 2017 has shown some progress in delivery more effective services but there remains much to do. The messages from internal audits and external scrutiny have been drawn together into main priorities for the Improvement Plan.

4. Planning for where we want to be for children and their families

Powys Children and Young People's Partnership Vision

The partnership aims to ensure that:

‘Children and young people are safe, happy and healthy, feel valued and value others, are treated fairly, have lives filled with learning, thrive and are able to enjoy life and spend quality time with family and friends.’

Priorities for Improvement and Development

In order to achieve this vision and deliver the necessary improvements in safeguarding services, the partnership agreed that the priorities for the Improvement Plan are:

- The leadership, culture, values & behaviour of the partnership ensure 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.
- Professional awareness, informed by listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people drives improvements.

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

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

As an Improvement Board, Council and multi-agency partnership we will drive change by focussing on these priorities. This will ensure that improvements to partnership working are aligned and made across all aspects of services for children and young people.

5. How will we get there?

There are a number of key themes that will underpin the improvement plan:

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 and continue to thrive. Our workforce are 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 a number of 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 the:

- 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.

Responsibilities & Accountabilities

Achieving the priorities relies on a whole partnership approach. In order to ensure that the pace of change and improvement continues, there will be a number of project boards / working groups operating under each priority (see below). Please look at the detailed Improvement Plan Governance Report for details of each group.

Communications Plan

The success of the Improvement Plan in Powys relies on communication and engagement with a number of different stakeholders. A number of methods for communicating improvement progress have been which will continue to be used to inform stakeholders:

- Regular updates to Council Management Team and Regional Partnership Board
- PLOG Newsletter
- Websites –Improvement to Children’s Services Website PCC
- Fortnightly ‘Getting to Good’ newsletter to all Children’s Social Care
- Updates to Children’s Partnership Board.

A stakeholder analysis setting out levels of interest and influence in achieving the Improvement Plan and a stakeholder engagement table to identify the purpose and methods of engagement have been developed.

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 a number of significant risks to the Improvement Plan including the 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.

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

Leadership, Governance & 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 what children, young people and families are telling us about their experience. There will be

positive and visible leadership that ensures there is clarity of priorities and expectations. Leadership will be provided at many different levels but always with a consistency of message and approach. Leadership will embed a can do approach.

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 & 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 of 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

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Priority Improvement Area	Recommendations	Action	Outcome Success	Lead	Timescale	Progress
A Leadership Governance and Partnership (Improvement Board Lead- Chief Executive)	Immediate A.1 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 Chief Executive to establish an Improvement Board to provide additional support, to develop and implement the Improvement plan.	Improvement Board established and meeting regularly with partner agencies	Chief Executive	October 2017	
		Weekly meetings to be established by the Chief Executive across all Directorates to ensure corporate support is being made available in a timely manner	Weekly meetings established and taking place and all parts of the Council are undertaking their role as corporate parents.	Chief Executive	October 2017	
		Areas that require investment to support best practice and safeguard children are identified and the Council supports the Service to deliver these.	Invest to save bids completed. Better Outcomes achieved for children and their families. Children in Powys are Safeguarded.	Head of Children's Services Head of Children's Services	October 2017	

			Children from Powys are supported to live in Powys.			
	<p>A.2 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.</p>	<p>Weekly meetings to be held with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder.</p> <p>The Council will ensure corporate oversight and support as corporate parents.</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee will regularly require an update on progress being made.</p>	<p>Weekly meetings established and taking place and all parts of the Council and Elected Members are undertaking their role as corporate parents.</p> <p>To provide a safe environment to safeguard children and young persons of Powys</p>	Chief Executive	October 2017	
	<p>Medium</p> <p>A.3 Effective multi-agency quality assurance systems and training arrangements should be established to ensure thresholds</p>	<p>Regional threshold document to be launched and implemented in Children's Services and with partner agencies.</p>	<p>Partner agencies understand the thresholds for an Assessment to be undertaken by Statutory Children's Services.</p>	Head of Children's Services	Launch 2 nd October 2017	

	<p>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>	<p>To undertake multi-agency training needs analysis and publish a multi-agency training brochure</p> <p>To increase the number of multi-agency child protection fora from two programmes to three programmes</p> <p>To establish multi-agency child protection decision making protocol</p>	<p>Threshold for Assessments are consistently applied.</p>	<p>Professional Lead - Business Support Resources</p> <p>Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead</p>	<p>November 2017</p> <p>January 2018</p>	
	<p>Medium A.4 There is a need for clear strategic</p>	<p>Develop a guide for partners</p>	<p>There is clearer understanding across</p>	<p>Senior Manager - Child Care South</p>	<p>December 2017</p>	

	<p>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>	<p>around children's services to include threshold document, governance structures and personnel to key contacts and decision processes to be supported via child protection fora</p>	<p>partners about the strategic direction and operational protocols of children's services</p>	<p>& CWD / Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD</p>		
	<p>Medium A.5 There should be an early consideration of the impact of the changes made as a result of the commissioned review and whether decisions made as part of the review should be revisited.</p>	<p>Undertake a review of Children's Services re-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</p>	<p>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>	<p>Children's Services SMT</p>	<p>November 2017</p>	

		specific 16+ Team and whether these services can be protected and enhanced within the new structure.				
	<p>Medium A.6 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 clarity about, and training to understand, the direction of services and the particular risks inherent in children's services.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Elected Member have a greater understanding of the inherent risks in Children's Services.</p> <p>Children's Services are recognised as a High Risk area for the Council and receive full corporate support to ensure delivery of high quality Services.</p>	<p>Head of Children's Services</p>	<p>November 2017</p>	
	<p>Medium A.7 The chief executive must make arrangements</p>	<p>To develop a children's services training module to</p>	<p>Cabinet and all elected members have clear knowledge</p>	<p>Head of Children's Services</p>	<p>November 2017</p>	

	<p>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>	<p>meetings as set out in the Terms of Reference. Provide an IAA briefing to Corporate Management Team and Members and implement regular reporting under the Corporate Improvement Plan for delivery of IAA</p> <p>Undertake a mapping and gapping exercise across the Council for all IAA functions.</p> <p>Work with the social values forum supported by PAVO to develop community responses to building families resilience</p>	<p>Parenting Group to ensure the Council discharges its Corporate Parenting Responsibilities.</p> <p>Clear View across the Council in respect of how IAA responsibilities are being discharged.</p> <p>Areas for improvement identified.</p>	<p>Director of Social Services</p> <p>Senior Manager CYPP</p>	<p>October 2017</p> <p>October 2017</p>	
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		<p>Reinstating In-Focus news briefing to be provided on termly basis to Council and to all partners</p> <p>Promotional campaign around PPD, Info-engine and DEWIS</p>	<p>Improved communication across the Council and partners and strengthened provision of IAA for citizens.</p>	<p>Communications & Engagement Officer</p> <p>Communications & Engagement Officer</p>	<p>December 2017</p> <p>December 2017</p>	
	<p>Long term A.9 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</p>	<p>Implement and fully embed the Regional Threshold Document across Children's Services and Partner Agencies.</p> <p>Work with Partners to review and strengthen multi-agency child protection protocol and practices</p>		<p>Head of Children's Services</p> <p>Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead</p>	<p>Launch 2nd October 2017</p> <p>March 2018</p>	

	required to support this.	Undertake Themed Audits to ensure that Thresholds are being consistently applied.		Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	December 2017	
		Undertake feedback events (on-line) to ensure that staff and partners understand and consistently apply thresholds.		Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	February 2018	
		Threshold Document to be included in all staff induction.			November 2017	
		Ensuring threshold document is included in partners agencies induction programme		Professional Lead - Business Support Resources	December 2017	
				Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead		

	<p>Long term A.10 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.</p>	<p>To ensure annual updates of the population and wellbeing assessment</p> <p>To develop and implement the wellbeing and area plans ensuring robust reporting and monitoring through clear governance arrangements (RPB and PSB)</p> <p>To undertake thematic reports in relation to IAA and early intervention and prevention across the RPB partnership arrangements</p> <p>Develop management</p>		<p>Strategic Programme Manager</p> <p>Regional Partnership Board Coordinator</p> <p>Regional Partnership Board Coordinator</p>	<p>March 2018</p> <p>June 2018</p> <p>January 2018</p> <p>December 2017</p>	

		information data that is robust, reliable, and accessible and provides insight to develop patterns.		Strategic Programme Manager		
	<p>Long term</p> <p>A.11 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 involvement of staff and young people and ensure children are not placed at risk.</p>	<p>Review and strengthen engagement and consultation processes within the management of change policy to include service user and partner agencies.</p> <p>Strengthen and implement the communications and engagement strategy for children services to include formal and informal</p>		<p>Professional Lead - Human Resources Management and Development</p> <p>Communications & Engagement Officer</p>	<p>December 2017</p> <p>January 2018</p>	

		engagement for a wide range of stakeholders				
B Case Management /Strategy and Models of Care (Improvement Board lead- Director of Education/ CYPP Co-Lead)	Immediate B.1 The local authority must ensure assessments are carried out within statutory timescales and are undertaken in partnership with children and families.	Performance Management information report to be further developed and available to all levels of staffing, management and Members to ensure that assessments are completed within statutory timescales.	All staff, Managers and Members will have access to management information in relation to key performance indicators Statutory timescales are routinely being met and the views of children and young people are informing the assessment	Strategic Programme Manager	October 2017	
		The new Quality Assurance Framework to be implemented.	Team Managers and Senior Managers are using the new Quality Assurance Framework to monitor the quality of the assessment being undertaken	Head of Children's Services	October 2017	
		Managers ensure that statutory timescales are routinely being	Children's views inform personal/ individual interventions and planning.		October 2017	

		<p>met and the views of children and young people are informing the assessment.</p> <p>Social workers to complete the "What Matters" document with the child/ young person as part of all assessments.</p> <p>Social worker to have easy access to performance data to assist the staff in management of timescale</p>	<p>Child's records contain an accurate account of the child's experiences, an analysis of their cultural, religious and diversity needs, and detailed reasons for key decisions.</p> <p>Assessments are routinely completed within statutory timescale and are undertaken in partnership with the child.</p>	<p>Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD & Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD</p> <p>Front Line Team Managers</p> <p>Strategic Programme Manager</p>	<p>October 2017</p> <p>October 2017</p>	
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<p>Medium B.2 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>Quality Assurance Framework to be implement to monitor the quality Assessments and Plans.</p>	<p>Evidence that High Quality Assessments and Plans are being undertaken consistently across the service.</p>	<p>Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	
	<p>Regular Supervision to facilitate monitoring of the Quality of Assessments and Plans.</p>	<p>Assessments and Plans are balanced i.e. recognise strengths as risks.</p>	<p>All Managers</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	
	<p>Training to be delivered regarding Outcome focussed planning to improve the quality of plans.</p>	<p>All Agencies actively contribute to Assessments and Plans in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Professional Lead - Business Support Resources</p>	<p>December 2017</p>	
	<p>Implementation of agreed Strengths Based Model across the Service and with Partner agencies.</p>	<p>Agreed SW Model recognised, understood and underpinning all assessment and planning in Powys.</p>	<p>Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD</p>	<p>31st January 2018</p>	
		<p>Staff have a clear understanding of</p>			

			Departmental expectations.			
	<p>Medium B.3 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>Policies, Procedures and business processes to be updated that clearly set out requirements for all staff.</p> <p>Additional business and data support for staff to ensure information is recorded on WCCIS and is up to date.</p> <p>Requirements regarding record keeping to be included as part of staff induction.</p>	<p>Staff have a clear understanding of Departmental expectations</p> <p>Policies, Procedures and Business processes being adhered to.</p> <p>Information is recorded in line with Departmental Policy.</p> <p>Information held is accurate up to date and systematically stored.</p> <p>All staff are aware of Departmental requirements.</p>	<p>Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD / Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead</p> <p>Strategic Programme Manager / Professional Lead - Business Support Resources</p>	<p>Phase 1 – November 2017 Phase 2 – January 2018</p> <p>January 2018</p> <p>December 2017</p>	

		<p>Clear and up to date business processes are established that detail how and where information should be recorded to ensure Management Information is accurate.</p> <p>Review of workloads to ensure staff have the capacity to deliver high quality record keeping in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Record keeping is of a high quality and is up to date.</p> <p>Consistency in Practice across Children's Services.</p> <p>Few anomalies in Performance Management information.</p> <p>Social Workers will have reasonable Caseload levels.</p> <p>Children and their Families will experience high quality and meaningful interventions.</p> <p>Staff Morale will be high.</p>	<p>Professional Lead - Business Support Resources / Senior Manager Resources & Placements</p> <p>Strategic Programme Manager /Strategic Programme Manager</p> <p>Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD</p>	<p>November 2017</p> <p>October 2017</p>	
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	<p>Medium</p> <p>B.4 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 will publish its requirements for PPD and setting out how it will meet the requirements to deliver IAA</p> <p>Develop training and capacity within PPD for delivering IAA</p> <p>Review and strengthen handling of cases & transfer of information between EDT and PPD</p>	<p>Clear understanding of the role and purpose across the Council.</p> <p>Improved IAA function available to citizen's.</p> <p>Seamless transition of cases between EDT and PPD.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD / Senior Manager CYPP</p> <p>Senior Manager - Child Care North & PPD</p>	<p>January 2018</p> <p>November 2017</p> <p>November 2017</p>	

	<p>Medium B.5 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>To implement the strengths based model to incorporate staff within children's services and partners</p> <p>Implement Signs of Safety or similar model</p>	<p>Children's Services will have an effective model of assessment that is understood by all staff and partners.</p> <p>Families receive a consistent and equitable service.</p>	<p>Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD</p>	<p>January 2018</p>	
	<p>Medium B.6 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>Complete listening and learning exercise with foster carers and develop recommendations for service improvement</p> <p>To develop peer support for foster carers</p>	<p>The Department will have a further understanding of the needs of its foster carers.</p> <p>Additional support and services available to support foster carers.</p> <p>Increased numbers of foster carers which facilitates stronger</p>	<p>Improvement Programme Manager / Senior Manager Resources & Placements</p> <p>Senior Manager Resources & Placements</p>	<p>January 2018</p> <p>December 2017</p> <p>Phase 1 - January 2018 Phase 2 – June 2018</p>	

		To develop an intensive support service for carers with children with more complex needs	matching with children who need to be Looked After. Reduction in placement breakdowns.	Senior Manager Resources & Placements	December 2017	
		Development policy framework for fostering To review and implement a recruitment and retention strategy	Reduction in the numbers of children who need to be placed outside of the Local Authority.	Senior Manager Resources & Placements Senior Manager Resources & Placements	November 2017	
	Medium B.7 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.	Engagement and development with staff to ensure care and support plans are SMART and outcome focussed and include the voice of the child	Clearly developed care plans that are focussed on outcomes and incorporate the voice of the child	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	December 2017	

	<p>Long term B.8 The local authority must ensure compliance with the active offer of the Welsh language.</p>	<p>Corporate action</p> <p>Review capacity within Children's for provision of an active offer / possible target recruitment required</p>	<p>The council are able to fully comply with the active offer of the Welsh Language</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Improvement Programme Manager</p>	<p>September 2018</p> <p>September 2018</p>	
<p>C Workforce (Improvement Board Lead-Director of HR)</p>	<p>Immediate C.1 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.</p>	<p>Phase 1 - review of current staffing levels to provide additional staff and capacity to front line teams.</p> <p>Phase 2 – review management capacity</p> <p>To deliver specific induction programme for social care managers that ensures new</p>	<p>Social Workers in the front line teams have manageable caseloads.</p> <p>Managers providing regular oversight that is clearly evidenced through recording.</p> <p>Managers have a manageable workload</p> <p>New Managers have the skills and knowledge required to effectively undertake their role.</p>	<p>Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD</p> <p>Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD</p> <p>Professional Lead - Business</p>	<p>October 2017</p> <p>December 2017</p> <p>October 2017</p>	

		<p>managers have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their role in Powys in a timely way</p> <p>Additional capacity to be provided to undertake investigations of and disseminate learning from Stage 1 complaints.</p>	<p>Increased capacity for Team Managers and ATM's to provide Management Oversight of casework.</p> <p>Department responding to Complaints in a timely manner.</p> <p>Department learning from complaints and taking steps to improve practice.</p>	<p>Support Resources / Senior Manager Resources & Placements</p> <p>Head of Children's Services</p>		
	<p>Immediate C.2 Senior managers should take steps to</p>	<p>Publish and implement Quality</p>	<p>The supervision policy is embedded within all</p>	<p>Head of Children's Services</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	

	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.	Assurance framework	service areas. The quality of supervision is reflective and analytical. Staff have supervision every 4 weeks including individual cases discussions which are recorded on the child's file. Social workers are supported in their interventions with children through reflective supervision.		October 2017	
		Updated supervision policy to be implemented		Head of Children's Services	October 2017	
		All supervision dates to be recorded on Trent to ensure compliance with policy regarding timescales.		Senior Managers		
		Audit of supervision.			October 2017	
		Receiving and analysing monthly supervision reports		Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	October 2017	
		Improve management oversight through monthly reporting at SMT		Head of Children's Services	October 2017	
		There is a specific induction programme for social care managers that ensures new		Strategic Programme Manager	October 2017	

		managers have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their role in Powys in a timely way		Professional Lead - Business Support Resources Davies		
	Immediate C.3 Caseloads monitoring is required to ensure there is sufficient capacity for workers to engage effectively with children and their families.	Redistribution of case work allowing increased management capacity which will ensure increased management oversight.	Caseloads reduced. Effective interventions delivered to children and their families. Increased Positive feedback/compliments from Service Users.	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	October 2017 October 2017	

		Recruit additional staff as identified to ensure sufficient capacity for workers to effectively engage with children and their families.	Reduction in the use of agency staff.	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	October 2017	
		Streamline the recruitment process, ensuring sufficient business support, to ensure timely recruitment of staff.	Average time to fill vacant posts is reduced	Human Resources Business Partner	October 2017	
		Identify and agree a strengths based care planning Model.	All staff will be aware of the strengths based model that is to be introduced.		October 2017	
		A brief outline of the chosen model to be provided to all staff.	Staff will have an increased knowledge of the model and stages of implementation.	Senior Manager - Child Care South & CWD	October 2017	
	Medium				January 2018	

	<p>C.4 The local authority must ensure every employee understands the legislative and statutory requirements in safeguarding children and action is taken to address poor performance.</p>	<p>Mandatory training for all Council staff to communicate legislative and statutory requirements in safeguarding</p>	<p>Improved employee awareness of Legislative and statutory requirements across the Council.</p> <p>Risks to children are reduced.</p>	<p>Professional Lead - Business Support Resources</p>	<p>December 2017</p>	
		<p>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.</p>	<p>Children and their families are receiving high quality Social Work interventions that improve Outcomes.</p> <p>Children and their families receiving timely interventions that are supported by all partners.</p>	<p>Professional Lead - Business Support Resources / Senior Manager Resources & Placement</p>		
		<p>There is a specific induction programme for social care managers that ensures new managers have the necessary skills and</p>	<p>New Managers have the skills and knowledge required to effectively undertake their role.</p>	<p>Professional Lead - Business</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	

		<p>knowledge to undertake their role.</p> <p>All new starters to Children's Services are successfully inducted and are given the right information at the right time to settle into their role and equip them to do a good job.</p>	<p>All staff have the basic skills and knowledge required to undertake their role effectively within Powys.</p>	<p>Support Resources</p> <p>Professional Lead - Business Support Resources</p>	<p>December 2017</p>	
	<p>Medium C.5 A robust workforce strategy should be developed as a matter of urgency to include short, medium and long</p>	<p>Develop a social care Workforce Strategy (including Talent & Succession Planning) which</p>	<p>% of Permanent staff increases</p> <p>Increased retention of staff.</p>	<p>Senior Officer - Culture & Leadership Development</p>	<p>January 2018</p>	

	<p>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.</p>	<p>ensures staff are supported to reach their potential.</p> <p>Exit Interviews to be undertaken with all social care staff and used to inform the Workforce Strategy.</p> <p>Feedback from Exit Interviews to be considered by SMT on a Quarterly basis</p> <p>Develop a clear and transparent selection process that ensures high quality social work staff are selected.</p>	<p>There is a clear and consistently implemented exit interview process for all social care staff leaving Powys CC or moving to a different area within Children's Services.</p> <p>Feedback from Exit interviews is used to inform the Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Strategies.</p> <p>Standardised agreed threshold agreed for recruitment decisions which is understood by all.</p> <p>Recruiting Managers are trained to ensure they have the skills to implement the selection process and</p>			
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		Develop a process to gather and review candidate feedback.	<p>select high quality staff.</p> <p>100% of recruiting managers have completed the recruitment training.</p> <p>Candidates feedback on the selection process in gathered and reviewed</p> <p>Candidates feel they have a fair opportunity to demonstrate the skills and knowledge.</p>			
	Long term					
D Practice Quality and Assurance (Improvement Board Lead-Head of Children's Services)	Immediate	D.1 An assurance mechanism must be implemented as a priority to ensure compliance with legislation, statutory guidance and protocols with regard to looked after children and children at risk.	Quality Assurance framework will be implemented	Regular auditing, to ensure management oversight of the quality of work being undertaken	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	End October 2017
			Develop the IRO Monitoring form	Independent oversight in respect of care planning for children who are looked after		October 2017
			Review of current policies and procedures to	All staff will have access to policies and procedures which will	Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead	

		<p>ensure that they comply with legislation, statutory guidance and protocol with regards to Looked After children and children at risk.</p> <p>Implement and embed the regional threshold document</p>	<p>can be used to effectively guide their practice.</p> <p>Appropriate referrals are made by all agencies based on an agreed threshold.</p>	<p>Head of Children's Services</p> <p>Head of Children's Services</p>	<p>October 2017</p> <p>Launch 2nd October 2017</p>	
	<p>Medium D.2 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</p>	<p>Detailed Management information reports to be developed in line with service requirements.</p> <p>Performance Management to be a standard agenda item for SMT and OMT.</p>	<p>Management information is analysed at all levels of the Service and plays a key role in decision making.</p> <p>Evidence that Management Information is informing Decision Making. Performance against Key performance</p>	<p>Strategic Programme Manager</p>	<p>December 2017</p>	

	<p>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.</p>	<p>Performance information available to and scrutinised by Elected Members.</p> <p>Data Quality Clerks to work with the service to ensure that available information is robust and reliable.</p>	<p>Indicators is readily available.</p>		
	<p>Medium D.3 A quality assurance system must be established 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>Medium</p>				<p>January 2018</p>

	<p>D.4 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>Children's Services to Recruit a specific member of staff to investigate stage 1 complaints and disseminate learning from complaints across the service.</p>	<p>Complaints are responded to in a timely manner.</p> <p>Independent investigation of all complaints.</p> <p>Learning from complaints shared across the service and leading to improvements in practice.</p> <p>Analysis of complaints to inform planning and delivery of services.</p>	<p>Interim Safeguarding Children's Lead</p>		
	<p>Long term</p>					

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 reviews¹ and standards for Children's and Adults Services against which reviews can be conducted² 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 intervene early and prevent greater need arising.
- 2. To manage risk confidently and effectively when providing support to families where children and young people at the 'edge of care'** by making sure that need is accurately assessed, resulting in the right children being accommodated at the right time. This includes supporting families to avoid children becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks.
- 3. To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements** which meet the diverse range of children's needs.
- 4. To give children 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.

¹ Social Services Peer Review Guide January 2016

file:///C:/Users/user/OneDrive/MAG/Peer%20Review/141216_Peer%20Review%20Manual%20Final_Draft.pdf

² 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>

These aims are underpinned by the following objectives:

- n. 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.
- o. The majority of children are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families.
- p. 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.
- q. 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.
- r. 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.
- s. Multi-agency arrangements to assessing and managing risk to vulnerable children and young people need to be robust.
- t. 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.
- u. 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.
- v. 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.

- w. Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.
- x. 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.
- y. 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.
- z. Placements should support a positive transition to independence, adulthood, education, employment, and training and, where applicable, resettlement back into the community from custodial settings.

DRAFT

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. The majority of 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 co-ordinated 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. The majority of 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.

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 CAF/CASS 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.

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