



Working Together

Improving the lives of children and young people

in Worcestershire

Ofsted Monitoring Visit Feedback: January 2018

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

22 March 2018



Supporting...

Children and Families



From A to D

- **A – Full Safeguarding Inspection Oct/Nov 16:** *There are widespread and serious failures in the services provided to children in Worcestershire who need help and protection and children looked after*
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- **B – First monitoring visit May 2017 :** *The local authority's improvement plan is not yet resulting in progress in a number of key areas*
- **C – Second monitoring visit September 2017:** *The local authority has been working hard to improve services to children since Ofsted inspectors conducted a monitoring visit in May. Many of the actions taken by the local authority are quite recent, and some are too new to have yet had a significant impact on improving services. However, the local authority has achieved some tangible improvements 2017*
- **D – Third monitoring visit January 2018:** *While services for children in Worcestershire continue to require much work to be of a good standard, progress has been made since the last monitoring visit*

Strategic Commitment, Investment and Leadership

- Elected members and seniors leaders clearly articulate the improvements that must be made to ensure that children receive effective services. Significant financial investment means that senior leaders are able to implement change, from a very low base, where it is needed
- Leaders recognise that a strong infrastructure needs to be in place to support effective social work practice and while practice overall needs to improve, positive progress is starting to be made

Our areas of continued weakness

- The quality and consistency of management oversight and decision-making remain areas of improvement
- The local authority has not yet achieved its ambition to reduce caseloads for all social workers.
- Team managers are not yet sufficiently proactive in making the right decisions for children in accordance with their levels of need

Working with Partners

- Partners reported to inspectors that the Director of Children's Services and senior managers are acutely focused on delivering the required improvements to services for children.
- As a result, an understanding that all partners must contribute to the safeguarding and support of children has been reached. Strategic arrangements to deliver this multi-agency commitment in practice are already in place
- However operational delivery remains a challenge. The contribution to strategy meetings and child protection enquiries by partners remains too irregular and infrequent.
- The application of thresholds for intervention by children's social care and their partners **has improved** but remains inconsistent. Inspectors did not see any evidence of children suffering any adverse impact from this inconsistency
- The implementation of a universal model of assessing risk to children has been welcomed across the partnership as the establishment of a corporate language that will be understood by all

Performance Management

- The development of a performance framework is **very positive**. Relevant performance management information is available to assist staff and managers to understand their day-to-day work, and this supports social workers to take a more proactive approach to their practice
- Further work to be undertaken so that the local authority can be assured that performance data is always accurate.

Arrangements for managing the quality and timeliness of cases in pre and care proceedings

- **Inspectors were impressed** that a comprehensive system for managing work that is subject to the public law outline has been developed. This helps managers to track this important work, ensuring that timescales for court are adhered to, reducing drift and delay in case progression.
- The establishment of two case progression officers is strengthening the quality of court care planning. Social workers have received compliments from both the court and partners for the quality of their written evidence in court.

Quality Assurance and Learning to understand the experience of our service user

- **An effective whole-system approach to quality assurance has been developed.** The local authority is using a number of platforms for assessing user experience
- Overall, audit activity undertaken by the local authority accurately reflects the quality of social work practice seen by inspectors.
- **This diligent work** is helping senior managers and leaders to shape and develop improved services, and they now understand in far more detail the views of children and families.

Learning, development and support for staff

- A range of appropriate training and development opportunities are in place for social workers and managers, and this is starting to have the desired impact.
- Newly qualified social workers report that they are well supported in their first year in practice

Our quality of practice and child centred approach

- Inspectors saw a positive shift in the morale and culture of the workforce.
- Social workers are growing in confidence, and this is starting to result in creative, thoughtful and resourceful work with children.
- In their discussions with inspectors, social workers are calm, measured and focused as they go about their day-to-day business.
- Children's case files demonstrate that an **improved level of professional curiosity, including the identification and response to risk**, is more evident in social workers' practice.

Supervision

- Social workers value supervision, say they receive it more frequently, and that they feel listened to.
- Supervision by team managers continues to be process driven, not reflective and not always regular
- Service has acted to reduce the number of social workers each manager is responsible for in an effort to improve the quality of their oversight.

Our quality of practice and child centred approach

- Assessments and plans are demonstrating early signs of featuring the child's voice and their lived experience
- Direct work and the identification of risk are more evident in children's case records and reduced caseloads enable social workers to spend more time getting to know and understand children.

In Conclusion

“While there remain areas of improvement, **this is an ongoing and positive trajectory** for the quality of core social work practice.”