



# **Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Children's Services**

## **Post Ofsted ILACS Inspection Action Plan**

**July 2019 – July 2020**

## Introduction

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all children are happy, healthy and safe so that they get the best start in life. We are working with our partner agencies to further improve the services we provide to children, young people and their families.

This Post Ofsted Action Plan has been developed in response to the Ofsted inspection that took place between 20 May and 24 May 2019. The Ofsted Inspection concluded that Children's Services in Stockton-on-Tees required improvement to be good in all areas and made six recommendations. The inspection considered:

1. The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families – Requires improvement to be good.
2. The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection – Requires improvement to be good.
3. The experiences and progress of children in care and care leaves – Requires improvement to be good.
4. Overall effectiveness – Requires improvement to be good.

The Action Plan is informed by the six recommendations in the Ofsted inspection report published on 1 July 2019. The inspection report can be found here:



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This Action Plan has been co-produced with managers and practitioners in Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Children's Services, led by the Director of Children's Services.

The Action Plan will contain SMART objectives with detailed actions to be carried out. Monitoring of the Action Plan will be as follows:

- Bi-monthly monitoring of the plan by the Director of Children's Services and Assistant Director of Children's Social Care with senior managers for the first three months then quarterly thereafter;
- Overview and Scrutiny on a quarterly basis;
- Frontline management team on a quarterly basis;
- Annual Report to the Corporate Leadership Team.

The Action Plan will be updated bi-monthly and provide evidence of progress against timescales. This will form the basis of regular monitoring. A summary report will be prepared quarterly by the Assistant Director of Children's Services which will summarise progress and evidence how

the identified actions are improving the service and the difference this is making for children and families in Stockton-on-Tees. This will be submitted to the groups identified above to form the basis of the quarterly programme of review.

Key to RAG status:

	This action is achieved
	The action is on track to achieve
	The action is not yet on track

### Document history

Date issued	Version No.	Summary of changes	Author
26/09/2019	1.0	Action plan following the ILACS inspection in May 2019.	Rhona Bollands, Assistant Director Children's Social Care
09/10/2019	2.0	Review at Children's Social Care Service Managers Development Day	Rhona Bollands, Assistant Director Children's Social Care
24/10/2019	3.0	Review at CSMG (Children's Services Management Group).	Martin Gray, Director Children's Services
19/12/2019	4.0	Review at CSMG (Children's Services Management Group).	Martin Gray, Director Children's Services
10/02/2020	5.0	Review at CSMG (Children's Services Management Group).	Martin Gray, Director Children's Services

### OFSTED RECOMMENDATIONS – ILACS 2019

	Recommendation	Action/ Required Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Progress Update	RAG
1	Improve the timeliness in delivering children's plans without delay across all services by generally improving management oversight and grip.	<p><b>1.1 Action</b> Develop a quality assurance framework to support a whole systems approach.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Audits will evidence improvement in the timeliness of permanence for Children.</p>	November 2019	Service Manager Quality, Practice and Review	Advice and learning has been sought from South Tyneside Partners in Practice (PiP) which will inform a refreshed quality assurance framework. Completion on schedule.	
		<p><b>1.2 Action</b> A learning and practice forum to be developed in order to equip Social Workers, Team Managers and IRO's with the skills and tools to challenge and deliver improved services.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Effective Supervision will be evidenced in Audits.</p> <p>Frontline managers and IRO's will evidence increased skill, confidence and effectiveness through self-evaluation and evaluation by practitioners and managers.</p>	November 2019	Service Manager Quality, Practice and Review	A learning and practice forum is in development.	

	Recommendation	Action/ Required Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Progress Update	RAG
		<p><b>1.3 Action</b> A new legal gateway panel to be introduced to track cases and ensure children's plans are robust and timely.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Improvement in quality and timeliness of children's plans will be evidenced in audits.</p>	July 2019	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	A new legal gateway panel was introduced July 2019.	
		<p><b>1.4 Action</b> Permanency tracking will be embedded within the new ICS system.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Improved management performance reports will evidence improvement in quality of children's plans.</p>	November 2019	Assistant Director Business Support and Information	Implementation remains on schedule.	
		<p><b>1.5 Action</b> All care plans in pre-proceedings and care proceedings will be scrutinised by a senior manager.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Improved quality and timeliness will be evidenced within audits and via the weekly legal gateway panels.</p>	July 2019	Service Manager Fieldwork	Care plans are scrutinised via the weekly legal gateway meeting.	

	Recommendation	Action/ Required Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Progress Update	RAG
2	More effective tracking of children who are the subject of pre-proceedings work under the Public Law Outline (PLO) procedures.	<p><b>2.1 Action</b> A new legal gateway panel to be introduced to track cases on a weekly basis.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Weekly tracking via the new legal gateway panel will evidence improvement in drift and delay.</p>	June 2019	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	A new legal gateway panel was introduced in June 2019.	
		<p><b>2.2 Action</b> A new ICS children's system to be introduced with a specific legal module to support tracking.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Improved ICS system will produce reports to support tracking and evidence improvements in timeliness.</p> <p>An audit of pre proceedings work will be undertaken to ensure that this work is being initiated promptly and key assessments are being carried out in sufficient depth to provide the court with clear evidence supporting the Local Authority's plans for children.</p>	November 2019	Assistant Director Business Support and Information	Implementation remains on schedule. A training programme is underway for all staff.	

	Recommendation	Action/ Required Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Progress Update	RAG
		All looked after children will be provided with permanence in a timely way. Performance will be closely monitored with the new process being reviewed in February 2020 and 6 monthly thereafter with oversight by the Assistant Director Children's Social Care.				
3	Better recognition and approval of family and friends as carers under Regulation 24 arrangements.	<p><b>3.1 Action</b> All children subject of S.17/S.20 arrangements to be audited to ensure compliance and appropriate care planning.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Regular audits will evidence compliance.</p>	June 2019	Service Manager Fieldwork	<p>Audits were completed June 2019.</p> <p>All S.17/S20 arrangements/placements are now reviewed, tracked and monitored via a new legal gateway panel introduced in June 2019.</p>	
		<p><b>3.2 Action</b> S.17/S.20 procedure to be reviewed so that staff are clear that when a child cannot remain with a parent/carer due to safeguarding concerns they become S.20.</p>	June 2019	Service Manager Fieldwork	Procedure was updated in June 2019 and a briefing note shared with all staff to ensure that practice is understood and becomes embedded as early as possible.	

	Recommendation	Action/ Required Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Progress Update	RAG
		<p><b>Outcome</b> Monitoring via the Legal Gateway panel will evidence compliance and appropriate planning.</p>				
		<p><b>3.3 Action</b> Increase resources within our fostering team to ensure: timeliness of reg 24 assessments, annual unplanned foster care visits are undertaken in timescales and foster care reviews are completed in a timely manner.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Management reports will evidence improved practice and compliance.</p>	July 2019	Service Manager Looked After Children and Resources	<p>Additional resources were made available in July 2019. One additional post has been filled with another anticipated October 2019.</p> <p>All outstanding statutory annual foster carer unplanned visits took place in May 2019. Additional resources will ensure that compliance will be met in future.</p> <p>The number of outstanding foster carer reviews has decreased.</p> <p>The additional resource will ensure that the remaining reviews will be completed by December 2019.</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p></p>



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					Improved tracking and monitoring is now in place.	
4.	All case work decisions to be made by qualified workers.	<p><b>4.1 Action</b> All cases held by family workers to be reallocated to qualified Social Workers.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Regular audits will ensure that all work undertaken by unqualified staff is appropriately allocated and is subject to supervision by a qualified Social Worker.</p>	May 2019	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	All cases were reallocated during the ILACS – May 2019.	
5.	Improve the quality and sustainable impact of assessment and intervention with families who are repeatedly the subject of referrals and plans.	<p><b>5.1 Action</b> Social Workers and Managers will be provided with additional training and development to ensure assessments focus consistently on the outcomes to be achieved.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> The impact of additional training and development will be evaluated through audits and performance management data.</p>	December 2019	Service Manager Quality, Practice and Review	A Learning and Practice Forum is in development	

	Recommendation	Action/ Required Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Progress Update	RAG
		<p><b>5.2 Action</b> Additional learning to be sought from an external source.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Evidence of improved practice will be demonstrated through performance management data.</p>	October 2019	Service Manager Quality, Practice and Review	Advice and learning has been sought from South Tyneside Partners in Practice (PIP).	
		<p><b>5.3 Action</b> A tool to be developed to support practitioner's understanding of need.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Evidence of improved practice will be demonstrated within audits.</p>	December 2019	Service Manager Quality, Practice and Review	Project ongoing with an external commissioned provider (Valuing Care, Impower)	
		<p><b>5.4 Action</b> Social Work team sizes to be reduced so good quality supervision is achievable.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> Improved quality will be evidenced within audits.</p>	January 2020	Assistant Director, Children's Social Care	Work in relation to reviewing current structures is in development.	

	Recommendation	Action/ Required Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Progress Update	RAG
6.	Improve clarity in supervision records about both positive and negative changes to children's circumstances, and challenge from managers to any delay in agreed actions being achieved.	<b>6.1 Action</b> Supervision practice standards will be reviewed and amended to ensure that progress for the child is explicitly and purposely evaluated and recorded in all supervisions.	November 2019	Service Manager Quality, Practice and Review	Advice and learning has been sought from South Tyneside Partners in Practice (PIP) to support improved supervision practice.	Amber
		All Team Managers will complete training on reflective outcomes focussed supervision.			A Learning and Practice Forum is in development	Amber
		<b>Outcome</b> An audit of supervision to be undertaken to evaluate progress in supervision practice standards and identify any further practice development needs.			A Management and Leadership programme for Team Managers has been implemented.	Green