

Children's Services Strategy For Change and Improvement 2016-18

"Every single child in the Borough is important to us. So we are determined to give each and every one of them as many opportunities as we can to help them be the very best they can be in life. We'll do all we can to protect those children who need our care and we'll keep striving to provide the best in education.

To give them the confidence to grow into valued, respected and included members of the community. Our promise is that not one child in this Borough will be knowingly forgotten or let down.

We're on with it."

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PART 1

CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

DRAFT

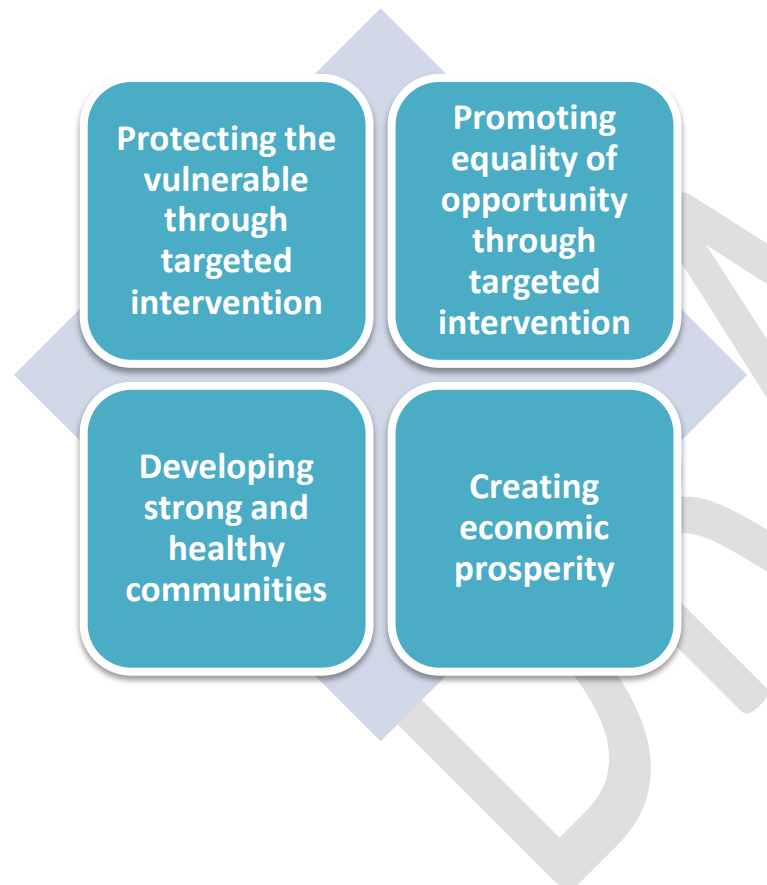
This Strategy

1. *This strategy sets out a single strategy for Children's Services for April 2016 – March 2018.*
2. *It brings together a range of programmes and plans into one place, to act as a single focus for improvement and change. It draws on:*
 - a. *The Council Plan, and the priorities identified for children and young people*
 - b. *The priorities identified in the Children and Young People's Plan as the key strategic document and plan for children and young people, for those actions where the Council has a role*
 - c. *Medium Term Financial Plan – being clear about savings proposals and where they will come from, as well as the reviews of services which have been identified.*
 - d. *The work in Children's Services around Ofsted readiness, and improvement based on performance management being clear about what we need to do to be as good as possible*
3. *It includes both:*
 - a. *The key transformation proposals identified across Children's Services, which form the basis of the Big Ticket Transformation Programme, and will be managed by the Children's Board as part of the Transformation Programme;*
 - b. *The business improvement priorities identified through self-assessment, business planning and inspection preparation. These will be managed through a reshaped Children's Services Management Team.*
4. *These priorities have been consolidated into one strategy to set out a clear programme of action, with clear accountability.*
5. *The strategy also*
 - a. *refreshes and updates information about the role and purpose of Children's Services, and provides a profile of children and young people, and so contributes to the Council's Big Picture programme*
 - b. *sets the framework for governance across Children's Services, incorporating budget planning and management, workforce development, risk management.*
6. *This strategy is a Council document, and is designed to be used to inform officers and members of the strategy for Children's Services following the reorganisation concluded in 2015.*
7. *It has been drawn up in 2 parts:*
 - a. *Part 1, covering Sections 1-5 is a stand-alone document, providing the high level summary of the strategy for Children's Services*
 - b. *Part 2, covering sections 6-7 provides the more detailed actions which will be used to support implementation and monitoring.*

The Council Plan: policy priorities and culture

8. The Strategy is a Council strategy to deliver the children and young people priority in the Council Plan.

9. It is therefore based on the key policy principles for the Council, and the new corporate culture statement which sets out how we work as an organization.



Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council is an organisation where all staff are trusted, supported and valued to make a positive contribution at work. Where we never lose sight of the fact that we are here to serve the people of the borough. This means we want this to be a place where:

- Everyone's views and opinions are encouraged, heard and properly considered.
- We share responsibility for our own learning and development and are encouraged and supported to do so by others.
- We work hard and feel comfortable to suggest new ideas, ways of working and to take managed risks.
- We feel a strong sense of belonging to the whole Council and our skills, knowledge and experience are used to benefit the organisation as a whole.

We are...

...an organisation where we all make a **positive contribution** at work for the **whole council**. Where we never lose sight of the fact we are **here to serve the people** of the borough.

This is a place where..

- We are valued, trusted and supported.
- We are heard.
- We take responsibility for our own development.
- We work hard
- We are not afraid to try something new
- We belong

Stockton: profile and vision

Stockton-on-Tees is a Borough of wide contrasts; a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages.

The Borough is 20,393 Hectares (Ha) in size with a population of 194,119 living in 84,470 dwellings; this gives a population density of 9.5 people per Ha.

The Borough's population has increased by 5.6% since the 2001 Census, whereas across the North East region there has only been an increase in population of 4.1%.

The Borough's population is projected to increase by 4.7% by 2022, then by another 3.4% by 2030 and a further 2.2% by 2037; equating to an additional 21,739 residents in 2037 compared with 2015.

Across the Borough there is a unique social and economic mix; whilst 28% of the population live within the least deprived areas of England, 28% live in the most deprived areas.

The Borough is ranked 88 out of the 326 local authorities districts in England; making Stockton-on-Tees within the 30% most deprived areas nationally

A survey carried out in 2012 showed that residents were more satisfied with the Borough as a place to live than the residents in the other local authorities that participated.

In the Census 2011, 93.4% of the population classed themselves as belonging to a white ethnic group, a decrease of 2.8% compared with the Census 2001.



Every single child is important to us. We are determined to give them as many opportunities as we can to help them be the very best they can be in life and we will do all we can to protect those children who need our care. Striving to ensure children get the best possible education, giving them confidence to grow into valued, respected and included members of the community.

Children and Young People in Stockton

[Infographic format]

- There are around 47,200 children and young people under the age of 19 in Stockton-On-Tees. This is projected to rise to 50,900 by 2025
- Children and young people under 19 make up about 24.3% of the total population¹, slightly higher than the national average.
- 21.8% of children live in poverty (compared to 18.6% nationally), and around 5,000 receive free school meals
- 10.4% of children aged 4-5 and 19.8% of those aged 10-11 are classified as obese.
- Only 29% of mums breastfeed still breastfeed 6-8 weeks after birth, compared to the national average of 47%
- 18% of pregnant Mums smoke, compared to the national average of 11%
- There are 30,000 pupils in schools
- Of these 92% of primary aged children attend schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted
- 52% of secondary aged children attend schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted
- There are around 558 children and young people with a statement of special educational needs or and 480 with an Education, Health and care Plan
- There are 380 children in care in Stockton
- There are a further 277 subject to a child protection plan – where there are serious concerns about welfare
- There are a further 1484 children in need, whose needs have been assessed and are receiving support to enable them to meet their potential
- There are currently 1950 live Early Help Assessments where multi-agency teams of professionals are working with families to tackle issues

¹ Child Health Profile 2016

Our story

1. Our network of nurseries, child-minders and other early years provision is excellent – amongst the best in the country, with xxx rated as good or outstanding, but we have some challenges in the take up of the free provision in some parts of Stockton. This means some of our children are not benefitting from a quality early years education, which can impact on their readiness for school.
2. We have some significant public health issues to tackle, including higher rates of child poverty than the national average; high smoking rates for Mums; low levels of breastfeeding; high rates of hospital admissions for self-harm. Levels of obesity however are similar to national averages, and there is a higher than average uptake of immunisations
3. We have a network of children’s centres providing a range of support to young families, but we have some challenges in maintaining this network in the face of budget reductions, and we will need to consider how we ensure services are targeted on those who need them most.
4. Our schools are gradually filling up as our population rises. Although the majority of children are able to get into their first choice of school, this is becoming increasingly difficult in some areas of North Stockton around primary school places and for secondary school places in Billingham.
5. Our schools perform well overall, but there issues about geographical variations in outcomes, and there are some issues about the gap between those children from poorer backgrounds, those with special educational needs and for children in care where outcomes are worse.
6. We want to make sure we are helping and supporting children and families as soon as they need it, and have developed our ‘early help’ proposals to support this work. We are having some success in identifying issues early through Early Help Assessments but we have more work to do to make sure this is more at the heart of what we do, and how we work, and that our partners are clear on the way services work together.
7. Compared to national and regional averages, we have high rates of children in the social care system – who have been assessed as having additional needs, or who are subject to child protection concerns or who are in the care of the Council.
8. The rate at which children become ‘in need’ – that is when they are assessed as being in need, is lower in Stockton than in our neighbours, but, children tend to be receiving more specialist support and therefore stay in the system for longer. This suggests we need to do more to work with children, young people and families earlier to prevent them needing social care support often referred to as ‘stepping up’ and that we need to do more to help families to cope without social care support – often referred to as stepping down concerns.
9. We have tended to have high rates of ‘No Further Action’ taken on referrals into social care, and once assessments have been undertaken. Some of the latter has been because we have not recorded outcomes consistently, and have undercounted our assessments.
10. We have high rates of children in care, and although this has stayed stable in recent years, it is a much higher rate than comparable and neighbouring authorities. We also have a large number of children being cared for by independent fostering agencies.

Big plans for the young people of our Borough

Our Vision

We have big plans for the young people of our Borough.

Every single child is important to us. We are determined to give them as many opportunities as we can to help them be the very best they can be in life and we will do all we can to protect those children who need our care. Striving to ensure children get the best possible education, giving them confidence to grow into valued, respected and included members of the community.

Key Strategic Links

The Children and Young People's Partnership brings together people from a number of agencies and organisations, across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, to ensure a focus on the things that will make the most difference for children and young people. The Partnership sets out its current ambitions in the Children and Young People's Plan 2015-18.

It is not the intention to replicate the content of that plan in this document but to focus on what the Council's role is in terms of delivering the outcomes and objectives contained within it.

Key Outcome

To improve life chances for children and young people, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable to poor outcomes.

Key Objectives

- 1) Ensure effective pre-natal and early years support for children and families
- 2) Ensure children and young people are safe and feel safe
- 3) Improve educational performance of all children and young people across the borough
- 4) Support young people to make a successful transition into adulthood
- 5) Improve outcomes for children and young people in care and care leavers

Change and improvement priorities: our key actions

We have identified the following as the key change and improvement actions for Children's Services for 2016-18. They are drawn from the Council Plan key activities, with additional analysis from more detailed improvement planning.

Leadership and governance

1. Develop a strategy for Children's Services which draws together high level priorities and ambitions, sets out a clear business strategy and connects these with change and improvement actions, and the financial targets in the Medium Term Financial Plan [this strategy]
2. Shifting to a systems leadership approach, which recognises the need for effective partnership, and which builds on the strengths of families and communities in keeping children safe and promoting wellbeing.
3. Enabling a stronger focus on case management, recording and accountability including a new case management system for children's social care as a replacement for the RAISE system, and which also addresses the further consolidation of systems, and a new system for early help.
4. A streamlined performance framework, which provides the right information and analysis at the right time to drive forward improvement and accountability.
5. A focus on skills and workforce to respond to a changing picture of demand and capacity, and which supports effective practice, more flexible and efficient ways of working, and improves, streamlines and simplifies processes to create efficiency savings.

Voice of the child and customer insight

6. A more systematic approach to voice of the child – taking all the information and feedback from children and using this to change what we do, improve services and to feed this back.

Universal and primary prevention

7. Deliver sufficient, good quality childcare places for all 3 and 4 year olds.
8. Deliver childcare places for disadvantaged two years olds, and children with special educational needs (SEN) or disability
9. The Council will need to change the way in which it provides a range of open access and universal services such as the support it has provided for young children through children's centres and through youth services. We have identified both of these areas as specific reviews to be undertaken in 2016-17, with both likely to lead to some fundamental changes and some reductions in services, and a bigger focus on trying to build capacity in families and communities to be able to cope. This will include a rethink of our approach to parenting.

Education, schools and learning

10. The Council remains committed to being proactive in its role to support schools to continue to drive forward improvements in outcomes and to narrow the gaps. We will have to do this in the context of all schools becoming Academies by 2022 at the latest, and with significantly reduced resources both from the withdrawal of Education Support Grant and reduced Dedicated Schools Grant from a national funding formula.
11. We will also need to continue to respond to the recent changes in the way in which support for those with Special Educational Needs is assessed and delivered, especially through SEN Support and where required through

Big plans for the young people of our Borough

Education, Health and Care Plans, and in the context of reduced High Needs Block Funding, as a result of a move to a national funding formula.

12. We will need to increase the numbers of school places in the next few years to respond to increasing demand from population growth, in migration and parental choice.
13. We will continue to provide opportunity and choice for young people in education, training or employment opportunities through to the age of 18, in the context of the Tees Valley Combined Authority priorities.

Early help and targeted prevention

14. We want to significantly increase our focus on early intervention and targeted prevention, as a way of trying to improve outcomes and reduce pressure on specialist services. We have a strategy in place, but we need to increase the pace of change, and the focus on early help as part of a fundamental rethink of the way we work, especially around how we tackle the signs of neglect, and the impact of issues such as parental mental health, drugs and alcohol use and domestic abuse. We also want to support skilled and effective practice, ensure an approach based on intelligence and targeting; implement clear pathways; improve the quality of assessment and planning and work more collaboratively with partners.
 - a. We have had some success at targeting our services at those children, young people and families through the Troubled Families programme, but we will need to extend this approach further to ensure we are working effectively across all partners to target our resources, and that we have the right type of services in place to meet need, because we are not seeing a noticeable impact of our current approach in reducing the demand for social care support. Key to this is a focus on children considered vulnerable, either because they are missing from home/care

or education or because they are exhibiting other signs of vulnerability as identified through local; qualitative or quantitative evidence.

Children in need of help and protection

15. We will play our role in the delivery of the Stockton Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan, with a focus on quality assurance of practice, engagement with key stakeholders, and development of practice in line with requirements of Working Together 2015.
16. We continue to have high numbers of children in need – where they have been assessed as being in need of social care. Although this is a pattern in the North East and especially Teesside, it is even more pronounced in Stockton. We will continue to ensure that referrals are appropriate, and that we retain our focus on working with partners to understand thresholds, especially in the context of a new early help approach.
17. We have higher rates of Section 47 enquires and children with child protection plans than other neighbouring or comparable authorities. When children are assessed as in need, they tend to require more specialist, long term and expensive support than in other areas. We need to take action to reduce these numbers, by effective targeting of support and early help approaches.

Children in care and care leavers

18. We have high but stable numbers of children in care. Our rates are consistently high, and we need to look at a number of areas of change in the way we work to tackle this, as it remains a major risk area for the Council's budget:
 - b. Supporting return home through a specific focused and targeted approach to working with families, potentially including the use of approaches such as Family Group Conferencing, restorative practice models

- c. Intensive working with families on the edge of care to prevent them from having to be taken into care. This might include new ways of working with our existing crisis and emergency provision.
- d. Fostering – reducing the number and cost of IFAs by focusing on our in house foster care services, including the scope for collaboration
- e. Adoption – developing a sub-regional approach to increase the number of adopters, and improve the times taken to place children, and to provide effective support post adoption. We will also be considering how we can support educational outcomes for adopted children.
- f. Improving outcomes for care leavers through a focus on improving pathway planning, and ensuring a range of housing / accommodation options such as Staying Put and move on accommodation linked to children’s homes
- g. Ensuring the best educational outcomes, including for post 16
- h. Developing the corporate parenting approach further to enable the Council and its partners to go beyond statutory requirements and use its people assets to support looked after children and care leavers.

	Where do we want to be	Where we are now / our story	Improvement agenda	Major change and transformation actions	Business Improvement actions
<i>Governance and leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear accountability Management oversight Understanding our communities Capacity to do the job Effective systems and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong partnerships Data and analysis roles well developed High volume of performance data High morale and low turnover, but some recruitment and retention pressures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the focus on empowered decision making More systematic approach to value for money Greater system leader role Systems and processes refresh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean / efficiency review Mobile and agile working options Replacing case management system Children's strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills and workforce development Managing capacity and caseloads Improving front line practice Systems which support efficiency Refresh the performance management framework Work with LSCB on multi agency challenge
<i>Voice of the child and customer insight</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent quality involvement Able to demonstrate learning and 'hearing' Systematic approach A commitment to take action and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of good practice across the Council and its partners Variety of consultation mechanisms Less well developed sharing, analysis and accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More sharing across agencies More systematic and using to drive change More feedback and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific major change project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop multi-agency toolkit and portal Establish best practice network Greater use of ICT in engagement Introduce annual review process for VOC Ensure clear feedback on 'you said, we did'
<i>Universal and open access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible and effective universal support as part of a refreshed early help offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network of children's centres in hybrid model Reduced number of youth delivery points Some challenges in take up of free early years offer High quality early education sector Challenges on school readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a shift to more targeted services, but retain a core universal offer Increased emphasis on self-sufficiency – families and communities Improved outcomes on school readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of youth service model Review of children's centres 0-5s services, including approach to health visiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide sufficient and high quality early years Increase take up of free education Establish clear offer for early help via hubs and access points Develop online support and guidance options
<i>Education, schools and learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools good or better Self-sustaining sector led school improvement Identifying and meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving schools but attainment gaps and challenges in secondary inspections Excellent early years quality Effective safeguarding No primary permanent exclusions Good attendance Low combined NEET and Not Known rates for 16-18 year olds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges on availability of school places in some localities Continuing to focus on SEND Strengthening sector led raising achievement boards RPA and post 16 options New business models resulting from reduced Education Services Grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing the Council's role in the context of the White paper and move to new national funding formula and reductions in funding Review and redesign our approach to SEND support and provision, including transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a sustainable future for Tees Valley Music Service Implement SEND reform Develop vulnerable pupils focus as part of early help Manage school place planning – zones, future capacity and potential free schools Strengthening sector led improvement
<i>Early help</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early identification and action Clear outcomes for families Quality assessment and planning Reduced referrals to social care Clearly understood thresholds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of projects, programmes and activities An increasing use of Early Help Assessment Lack of coherence and therefore opportunity to stem flow into social care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shifting from quantity of EHA to quality Single access and clear, flexible offer More focus on mental health, domestic abuse, drugs and alcohol and neglect Greater use of intelligence in targeting More coordinated parenting approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As in universal and open access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reshape the early help offer to be more coherent Embed Troubled Families in a revised approach Increase focus on outcomes Streamline parenting offer Implement graded care profile 2 Focus on neglect Embed Fairer Start approach for first 3 years
<i>Children in need of help and protection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear thresholds for referral Quality, speed and proportionate decision making Effective, evidence based case management Effective approach to vulnerable, missing, exploited trafficked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New front door approach in June Signs of safety and Graded Care Profile 2 being rolled out Revised CP plans and template in place, but needs further review Tees wide VEMT Effective YOT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective step up and step down Quality of assessment and planning Increasing focus on outcomes and root causes Focus on toxic trio Focus on effective interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Children's Hub Review short break provision for children with complex needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued focus on VEMT Implement CAMHS transformation plans Review approach to Domestic Abuse Develop model for YOT following national review Implement IRO improvement and performance plan including CP format Implement signs of safety
<i>Looked after children and care leavers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge in decision making Sufficiency of placements Clear and timely approach to permanence planning Timely adoption Evidence of strong corporate parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable but high numbers Some challenges on pathway plan completion Increasing quality of PEPs Challenges on health assessments Good quality accommodation options High rates of Independent Fostering Agency use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach to edge of care Better educational outcomes Reduced use of out of borough placements Sub regional collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New approach to LAC Review of Spark of Genius model Review of approach to fostering Implement sub regional adoption model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further audits of decision making / challenge Improve quality of plans, including pathways plans Ensure health agency duties met Improve PEPs and Virtual school head influence Review current CAMHS service Refresh LAC/care Leavers strategy via MALAP Continued Focus on NEETs and Not Known

Delivery

Accountability and reporting

1. Major Change and Transformation Projects are reported to the Children's Board.
2. Business Improvement actions are reported to Children's Services Management Team (replacing CYPMT).
3. Progress and review will be reported through Cabinet, as part of Council Plan reporting.

Improvement and Performance Management

4. This strategy sets out a single plan for change and improvement. At the heart of the approach is the development of a new approach to improvement and performance management. This is based on the following elements:
 - A focus on governance and leadership as a key strategic improvement theme, based on people and leadership; practice and systems and governance and accountability.
 - Programme management of the strategy;
 - The use of business improvement and process mapping to identify improvements to current practice and to help design the new ICT system for early help and social care;
 - ;

- A refreshed PMF including:
 - i. Service based approaches and performance clinics
 - ii. simplified set of data and indicators which will be used to drive improvement including corporate, service and management information
 - iii. Performance challenge – identifying specific performance issues for more detailed consideration and discussion at CSMT
 - iv. Case file audit programme
 - v. Practice observation – attendance of managers (e.g. at LAC Review, CP Conference, TAF) to observe practice
 - vi. Annual team performance reviews
 - vii. Multi agency file audits and thematic reviews, led by the LSCB
 - viii. Front line visits by elected members.

Workforce

5. A refreshed workforce strategy built around: effective practice; agile working and efficient process.

PART 2

CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS: OUR INVESTMENT PLAN

The following sections identify what we are going to do to change and improve.

Actions are grouped into key focus areas of:

1. Governance and leadership
2. Voice of the child and customer insight
3. Universal and open access services
4. Education, schools and learning
5. Early help
6. Children in need of help and protection
7. Children in care and care leavers

Each focus area includes

1. **Major change and transformation proposals.** These proposals form the Transformation proposals reported through the Children's Board, as they are large scale proposals which require a fundamental shift in the way we work, the services we provide or have a significant financial impact
2. **Business improvement actions** which are necessary for us to improve the way we work, and the outcomes for children and young people, but which can be managed as improvement projects and proposals within Children's services. These will be managed and reported through Children's Services Management Team.

Governance and Leadership of the system

Our priorities for excellence

We will:

- Have clear lines of accountability
- Understand our communities and their needs, and commission effective support to meet need
- Be an active and committed corporate parent
- Ensure senior managers and elected members have an understanding of the front line
- Be a learning organisation, and know ourselves well, with a commitment to listening and learning from the experience of children, young people and families

Our current position

- We have strong and effective systems and structures in place for providing Governance and leadership.
- The Council provides strong leadership and works well with partners. There are clear arrangements linking the LSCB, Children and Young People's Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board.
- There is a new Children and Young People's Plan which provides the framework for partnership working.
- We collect and analyse data about our communities.
- We have effective ways of engaging with children and families
- Members undertake front line visits.
- Senior managers undertake case file audits and observe practice.
- There is an extensive performance management system in place for monitoring and challenging performance. This includes case audits; annual

team reviews; multi agency case file audits; multi agency thematic reviews; monthly performance clinics

Our improvement agenda

- We have much good practice in place, and we use this to continually improve.
- Our improvement agenda is therefore focused more on how we can ensure that we remain focused and systematic in our approach. It is based around three areas:
 - People and leadership
 - The development of a clear strategy for Children's Services (this strategy):
 - Ensuring enough capacity to respond to need
 - Skills and workforce development
 - Innovation and efficiency in response to budget pressures
 - Practice and systems
 - Empowerment, managing risk and decision making
 - A focus on restorative practice
 - Effective systems, agile working
 - Governance and accountability
 - A new performance management framework
 - Collaboration between partners where this makes sense
 - Strong oversight from managers, the LSCB and elected members

Leadership, governance and delivery				
What	Detail	When	Who	Comments
People and leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear strategy and priorities • Focus on capacity and workloads • Effective practice 	To ensure a systematic improvement focus	April 2016 Ongoing	CSMT	Establishing a new Children's Services Management Team
	To balance demand with pressures on recruitment and retention and management of caseloads	Ongoing	CSMT	Recruitment and retention plan; Step Up, FrontLine, ASYE, Grown your own scheme
	To ensure a skilled and empowered workforce, delivering the best support and intervention to sustain families wherever possible	Ongoing	CSMT	LSCB Multi agency training plan plus Children's Services programmes
Practice and systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing risk and empowerment • Restorative practice • Effective systems and streamlined processes 	A focus on managing risk at the lowest level to reduce pressure on more specialist services	Ongoing	CSMT	Rewarding good practice and innovation Linked to LEAN review.
	To focus on recognising and building strengths – enabling children and families to cope	Ongoing	CSMT	Implementing restorative training and programmes e.g. Family Group Conference
	To support more front line working, effective case management and information sharing	Ongoing	CSMT	Agile working pilots, systems mapping to prepare for major system refresh
Governance and accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance framework • Cross agency collaboration – adoption; Hub; LSCB; early help • Oversight: senior managers, LSCB and elected members 	New PMF to be developed to support scrutiny and challenge, including Revised QEC / Performance reporting, and case file auditing.	April 2016	CSMT	Embedding performance and accountability in teams
	Economies of scale, shared resources, shared processes to facilitate better and quicker decision making	Ongoing	CSMT	As appropriate to each theme.
	Clear lines of accountability, visible challenge and scrutiny	Ongoing	CSMT	To be reported through CYP Select Cttee
Change and transformation actions (to be reported to Children's Board) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Refresh –March 2018, including replacement for RAISE and new system for early help • LEAN review – implement review of working practices to identify significant savings by March 2017, as part of improvement / process mapping • Children's Strategy – develop and agree overall Children's Strategy to steer change and improvement approach 				

Voice of the child and customer insight

Our priorities for excellence

We will:

- Listen to, hear, act on and feedback to children, young people and families

Our story

- We have extensive mechanisms in place to seek the views of children and young people in the way we deliver services
- We have an active Youth Assembly and Young Inspectors arrangements as well as a network of active and effective ways of working with our children in care, including the Lets take Action Group.
- We have skilled practitioners who work with children and young people to ensure that their views are taken into account in assessment and planning processes for early help and social care
- We provide a range of mechanisms such as advocates and independent persons where it is not possible to engage with children and young people directly.
- We have relatively few complaints, but we are not always good at using the outcomes from these processes to drive improvement
- We don't have a single, clear approach to using the views of service users in our planning and design of services.

Our improvement agenda

- Whilst we have a lot of information and undertake a lot of engagement activity, we are not always systematic about how this then influences our strategy, commissioning and systems.
- We need to be much clearer about how we collate the range of data we collect, and use this to influence how we deliver services, and how we ensure that children and young people receive feedback.
- We need to work with partners to develop a more systematic approach to voice of the child, which draws together a range of activity, and enables all partners to maximise our collective resources, as well as exploiting the opportunities of technology.
- We will develop:
 - Strategic approaches – including an annual report and process which all agencies will be expected to use
 - Operational approaches – a toolkit and guidance for agencies and training and materials
 - Individual approaches – support good practice by those engaging direct with children and young people to share standards and good practice

Voice of the child				
What	Detail	When	Who	Comments
Strategic activity: Develop annual reporting, good practice guide / portal, conversation and feedback	Ensuring a consistent approach and culture of seeking, listening and responding. Consider application of a joint standard as a tool for continuous improvement	April 2016	LSCB	As part of new VOC framework
Operational activity: Enabling all agencies to be committed to and effective at involving children and young people in the design and delivery of services Analysing feedback from individual children to influence practice, design and delivery of services	Guidance and toolkits to support effective practice Learning and workforce development including use of training DVDs and access to training courses	June 2016	LSCB	As part of new VOC framework
Individual activity Ensuring the voices of more vulnerable children are heard including children in care Ensure involvement of LAC in reviews Participation in Child protection processes Participation in CIN reviews and planning	To ensure we are responding to any clear messages coming from 1-1 discussions with children and young people To develop new technology to support involvement: MOMO application Use of apps such as Three Houses Texting FaceTime/ video conferencing for review	Ongoing in 2016/17	CSMT Review Unit	MALAP working with Let's take Action Reporting back through LSCB, MALAP
Change and transformation actions (to be reported to Children's Board) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific projects 				

Universal and primary prevention

Our priorities for excellence:

We will:

- Ensure effective universal services are in place, though this may mean they look different to the offer currently available
- Ensure children, young people and families know how to access them

Our story

- The vast majority of children will have their needs met through **universal services** such as those provided by early years, education and health services: nurseries, childminders, health visitors, schools, GPs and activities for young people and families.
- We retain an extensive network of universal services in Stockton, though there are financial challenges in retaining the level of provision in some areas:
 - Early years – the Council has a duty to ensure there are sufficient early years places (sufficiency), and that the free education offer for disadvantaged 2 year olds and for all 3 and 4 year olds is provided and that take up rates are high.
 - The responsibility for the commissioning of universal health services such as health visiting and school nursing has recently passed to the Council, and there are now choices in how to provide these services, though there remain some mandatory elements which must be in place whatever model is chosen.
 - Positive activities for young people, including the opportunity to participate in decision making has been a major focus for the Council, though the statutory duty is limited to a general requirement to ensure that there is access for young people

Our change and improvement agenda

- We will continue to focus on quality and take up of early years childcare and education as part of our early help approach and to ensure we are addressing school readiness
- For 0-5s, we have some opportunities to review the role and remit of our network of children's centres, as well as considering how services such as health visiting are planned and delivered in the future. Our aim is to ensure that all children and families are able to access support which gives them the best start in life. We will also need to consider how we effectively link services for the crucial early years (from conception to 2 years) when the majority of contact with families is from health visitors, through to 4 years old when there is an increasing influence from early years providers and into reception year at school. These services are currently not as coherent, coordinated and integrated as we would like them to be. This is a significant change agenda for us in 2016.
- We will also have to take some decisions about the extent to which we can continue to provide activities for young people. A Cabinet report in December 2015 outlined the basis of a new approach which set out a reduced role for the Council in providing activities, and a greater focus on the role of partners, including the private sector. This is associated with a shift towards a bigger focus on targeting in our work with young people.
- We will also have to take decisions on the way in which we support effective parenting, including the access to programmes, the types of programmes being delivered, and the opportunities to rethink parenting as a preventative intervention.

Universal and primary prevention

What	Detail	When	Who	Comments
Early years and child development	The development of sufficient early years places for 2-4 year olds Working with families on take up, especially in relation to the disadvantaged 2 year old offer Improving quality through an effective early years education focus To ensure a focus on schools readiness and fulfil the strategic priority of best start in life	Annual plan and implementation	EHPG	Annual sufficiency plan
Universal roles defined as part of new early help model as part of priority pathways	To ensure a consistent and continued focus on universal provision as part of an early help model	June 2016	EHP	As part of new early help model
Further development of the Family Hub and Family Information Service – a shift from information to support and advice	To ensure 24 hour support and advice is available to help avert issues escalating	Sep 2016	EHP	
Work to develop a greater focus on the promotion of self-sufficiency in families and communities through the provision of more information and guidance	To support a cultural shift from reliance on the Council, and encourage a focus on self-reliance and sufficiency, supported by community based volunteers, building on the Fairer Start model	March 2017	EHP	Implementation as part of phase 2 of Information Directory for Families

Change and transformation actions (to be reported to Children's Board)

- Review of youth services – especially looking at the Council's role in open access provision – places and activities for young people to meet, and if this can be done differently. This review is in addition to work already undertaken to identify savings in 2013-15.
- Review of children's centres. In addition to savings made on the Council's in house delivered children's centres in 2015, an additional significant savings target has been identified as part of a major review of children's centre provision for 2016. This review will result in a more radical reshaping of the model, with the likelihood of less children's centres, and a revised offer.
- Review of 0-5s healthy child programme – including the options to change the model of delivery and provision for health visiting, including moving towards a more targeted approach to Family Nurse Partnership model, for which national research has conclude few additional benefits over and above the existing health visiting model. There are opportunities with this review to consider the ways in which maternity, health visiting, children's centre and early years provision can be better integrated, with a stronger focus on risk and protective factors as well as proactive targeting through data.

Education, schools and learning

Our priorities for excellence

We will:

- Focus on quality early years provision and child readiness
- Ensure school places and choice
- Support the most vulnerable pupils, including those with SEN, from poorer backgrounds, looked after, missing education or in alternative provision.

Our story

- Early years settings and childminders are very highly rated through inspection.
- All maintained schools are rated good or better
- No primary exclusions in past 10 years
- Extensive work with schools on safeguarding
- Good attendance
- Only 51% of secondary aged pupils in schools good or better
- Implementing SEN reforms

Our change and improvement agenda

- The Council's role in relation to schools and education has changed significantly in recent years, as schools have become more autonomous, especially with the expansion of the Academy programme. The Education Excellence Everywhere White Paper is explicit about the Council's role to:
 - To ensure sufficient school places are available;
 - To support the most vulnerable pupils, such as those in care, from poorer backgrounds or with SEN
 - To act as a champion for children and parents
- We will also continue to have a role in early years education – sufficiency and quality, and in safeguarding.
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- There are increasing challenges in school place planning, with the majority of primary and secondary schools filling up. This will lead to increasing challenges future years, especially in Billingham. The CYP Select Cttee has recently undertaken a review of school admissions, focusing on a range of issues such as potential changes to admission policy and zones.
- The government has also signalled a reduction in the funding it provides for local authorities in the form of Education Support Grant. This funding currently supports a range of services both directly related to education and learning and in the support provided by a range of services to schools. This will require a fundamental review of the Council's role in the context of reduced funding.
- Such an approach will lead to consideration of new business and delivery models, with an increasing focus on traded services income.
- The CYP Select Committee will be undertaking a review of Educational Psychology in 2016/17. This will be focused on the development of a business model which focuses on a stronger early intervention approach (for early years and schools) the fulfilment of statutory duties and the opportunity to generate additional income
- The Government has signalled its intention that all schools will become Academies and that Councils will have a much reduced role in school improvement. This will lead to an increasing emphasis on the development of sector led raising achievement boards in Stockton, working with the Teaching Schools Alliance.
- Ofsted will be rolling out a new programme of SEND inspection later in 2016. This will focus on the quality of assessment, provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Education, schools and learning				
What	Detail	When	Who	Comments
Sufficient school places – place planning, and investment to ensure places in good or better schools	<p>Increasing pressure for school places</p> <p>Increasing autonomy of schools in acting as their own admissions authorities.</p> <p>May require more radical decisions to be taken about new schools</p>	Ongoing	AD Early Help	<p>Additional capacity at primary being managed in existing provision to 2018 with additional Basic Need funding Free school provision may be needed post 2018.</p> <p>Secondary places will reach capacity in 2018/19. Free school provision may be required.</p>
School improvement and the opportunity for sector led raising achievement boards, working with Campus Stockton Alliance	Context of changing funding for education, and increasing emphasis on sector led support models.	Ongoing	AD Schools	Continued shift towards academisation will significantly change the role of the Council in school improvement
Continued delivery of new SEND approach	Continued focus on SEND reforms – ensuring the availability of appropriate SEN provision and role of schools in SEN support, plus additional units and special school provision	Ongoing	AD Schools	May include assessment of the need to provide additional special school capacity to reduce out of borough placements
Vulnerable pupils	<p>To support schools in managing vulnerable pupils, and to ensure that there is a strong family focus to tackle root causes</p> <p>Reviewing Educational Psychology, including links to early help</p> <p>Children missing education and not accessing mainstream provision</p>	Sep 2016	AD Schools	As part of new EH model
Supporting young people to access further and higher education, employment or training	<p>Review of post 16 provision will shape pattern of provision</p> <p>Continued focus on ensuring low NEETs and Not Known figures for 16-18 year olds</p>	Ongoing	Ad EHPP	Implemented by Youth Direction
<p>Change and transformation actions (to be reported to Children’s Board)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the role of the Council in the context of reduced Education Services Grant, and a national funding formula • New business model development: for the SCITT, Northern Grid for Learning and Tees Valley Music Service • Fundamental review of SEN provision and support, including transport 				

Early help and secondary prevention

Our priorities for excellence

We will ensure:

- We are identifying issues early, and putting in place support which makes a difference.
- That thresholds between early help and statutory social care are understood and differentiated
- Assessments are timely, proportionate to risk and informed by background on the case and circumstances
- We can demonstrate that children and families experience good outcomes, and that we take action where this is not the case and issues need to be escalated.

Our story

- We have an Early Help and Prevention Strategy in place which sets out our shared objectives and ambitions, and we have reorganised services in the Council to develop a stronger and more integrated focus.
- We base our approach around the use of Early Help assessments (formerly CAF) which are the key tool for understanding need and strengths. We are increasing the numbers of these assessments being done, but we have more to do to make sure the support we provide is effective, and helps to stop issues getting worse.
- We have a network of organisations and projects offering early help, and have recently unvested in our Early Help Team to ensure more assessments are being undertaken

Our improvement agenda

- Our agenda is therefore:
 - We want all agencies to be clearer about what can and should be done through early help, because we are still seeing too many

referrals for social care support which could and should be managed through an early help approach, which suggests our approaches are not as differentiated as they need to be. This is placing more pressure on social care assessment and fieldwork services.

- We want to increase the use of early help assessment across all agencies as the means of assessing needs. We have introduced early help panels which support agencies taking the lead role in undertaking EHAs. We need to improve the quality of these assessments.
- We need to ensure that plans to support children and families are clear, specific and lead to better outcomes. We are not always consistently good at this.
- We need to ensure that there is a good system in place for working with families stepping down from social care, because we feel we are sometimes risk averse in this area as there isn't the clarity or confidence in the support available
- WE want to focus on secondary prevention – targeting at risk groups, identified through data, intelligence and collaboration.
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- We have developed a neglect strategy in recognition of the need to identify and address neglect as early as possible and its over-representation in CP plans, but we need to do more to accelerate this work to have an impact.

Early help and secondary prevention				
What	Why	When	Who	Comments
Integrated and cohesive model for delivery including levels and pathways for priority needs and services	To ensure quick and effective support and assessment, including those cases referred to early help from the Children's Hub Will include reshaped Early help hub / triage function, development of a locality approach and flexible Family Partnership and support model	June 2016	AD EHPP	Includes role of Troubled families
Quality in assessment and planning	To support a shift from quantitative approach focused on increasing numbers of CAF/EHA and a move to more qualitative approach, with increased focus on outcomes.	June 2016	AD EHPP	Includes a focus on quality and audit of assessments and TAF models
Effective and responsive services including commissioned provision	To ensure a range of support and challenge is available in a flexible way for all types of need. Focus on toxic trio interventions and neglect to ensure a focus on most common root causes	March 2017	EHP	Variety of flexible and responsive services commissioned to support pathways
A refocused parenting offer which supports a restorative approach	To ensure a single portal for accessing parenting. Use of evidenced based programmes	Sep 2016	EHP	Including focus on Family Group Conferencing
Better targeting through intelligence and data as part of preventative approach	To enable a focus on the most complex / high impact families across agencies, and to develop new methods of working with the most complex	Sep 2016	EHP	Building on Troubled Families approach
Ensure effective pathways and step up / down in place between early help and CIN	To ensure no wrong door for referral and quick and effective case management across thresholds of support, including CIN step down service / team	Sep 2016	EHP	Especially in context of Children's Hub
A specific, targeted approach to 0-3s	to ensure the rollout of the Fairer Start model for 0-3s and a new approach to language / communication and attachment, linked to children's centre model development and 0-5s review	Sep 2106	AD EHPP	
Change and transformation actions (to be reported to Children's Board) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth services ○ Children's centres 				

Children in need of help and protection

Referrals to social care

To improve our performance, and to be judged good or better by Ofsted, we need to be able to demonstrate:

- Thresholds are clear and understood by partners, and advice and support is available to support agencies to make appropriate referrals;
- There is no drift of delay in picking up cases and assessing them;
- Assessments are proportionate and families are not subject to formal investigation if this is not necessary
- Assessments result in a direct offer of help
- Decisions are taken by suitable qualified professionals and are recorded

Our story

- High rates, of referrals into social care – average 300 contacts per month. Around 70% of contacts do not lead to further social care intervention.
- Higher rates of referrals from schools than national and regional averages, but lower rates from Police
- Higher proportion of referrals which do not lead to an assessment being undertaken – as evidence of confusion or uncertainty amongst partners around thresholds, as well as reflecting a lack of understanding or confidence in the approach to early help
- Relatively high numbers of assessments being undertaken which ultimately lead to NFA. Our analysis suggests that significant numbers of these are being wrongly coded, as in fact work has been undertaken during the assessment which has reduced the risk in families, which should be counted differently.

Our improvement agenda

- Our improvement focus is therefore
 - We still have relatively high referral rates and we need to understand more about whether this is because agencies and individuals are not clear on the thresholds for undertaking assessments and for social care interventions
 - This may be leading to us undertaking too many assessments where we should be dealing with issues through our early help approach, and may reflect a lack of confidence in our overall early help approach, as this takes time to become embedded
 - Being clear on our approach to stepping up issues of concern and stepping down – making sure there is a clear pathway and that the family is ‘held’ throughout this process as a way of managing the risk of cases being re-referred.

Major change and transformation priorities

- Implementation of the multi-agency Children’s Hub as a new single front door for Hartlepool and Stockton-On-Tees social care
- This will require clarity on the processes and workflows from the new Hub– including the establishment of a single early help hub, with capacity to manage the early help offer

Improvement actions

- Regular multi agency audits of referrals to social care to determine decision making, and analyse if referrals should he been managed through early help

Vulnerable children and high impact families

To be judged good or better by Ofsted, we need to be able to demonstrate:

- For those children missing from home, care or full time school based education and who are potentially at risk of CSE are helped and protected by well-coordinated responses across agencies.
- Those children who may be experiencing parental mental health, substance misuse or domestic abuse are helped and protected
- For those considered most vulnerable there are effective multi agency responses, with full participation from relevant partners

Our story

- Our self-analysis would suggest that we:
 - Have effective approaches through the VEMT Group on children who go missing and around CSE
 - Our approach to Troubled families has been successful in Phase 1, but we want to change the model of delivery for Phase 2 to ensure that we are effectively targeting families, and that we are working to reduce the risks of those of most concern
 - Have good arrangements in place for Prevent though there are relatively few 'live' cases as yet
 - Need to develop further our approach to FGM, including the development of new procedures
 - Are confident we are effectively safeguarding children who go missing from home or care, though we have more to do to be able to evidence this from case records and systems
 - Have effective arrangements for managing private fostering
- A consistent theme for Children's Services is the fact that services are not always well coordinated to address the multiple needs of children and families, often resulting in a range of services working with families in isolation, because access to services is driven by individual assessments acting as the gateway for individual services.

- There are also a number of categories of children facing specific circumstances where there are enhanced risks about vulnerability – those who are often missing from home, care or education; or flagged as at potential risk of CSE; children with disabilities; or who may be potential victims of FGM or susceptible to radicalisation.
- Our work on the troubled families programme has developed a different approach – where 'vulnerability' is identified through a more rigorous process of analysis and intelligence to identify children, young people and families of concern, and to ensure that there are effective services in place to meet often complex and individual needs (rather than rigid, traditional services with their own specific access criteria), and that there is a focus on case management, with someone leading the process of implementation, with the right level of tenacity and skill.

Our improvement agenda

- Our improvement agenda is therefore based on developing this approach further as a way of ensuring a more effective response to need. This approach includes a more strategic analysis of our approach to:
 - Children missing from home and care and in cases where missing episodes are common, whether the individual management plans for these children are appropriate, or new approaches are needed
 - Children who go missing from school regularly, and where patterns may be repeated.
 - Children not receiving a full time education in school – either because they are accessing alternative provision, or because they are on fixed term or permanent exclusion from school, and therefore where there are concerns about patterns of behaviour which may be symptoms of wider issues, but which may currently only be being addressed as 'problems at school'
 - Children considered to be vulnerable from CSE.
 - Children considered to be at risk of FGM

- Children considered to be vulnerable under the Prevent arrangements
- We also want to explore this approach further and extend our work across partners to identify 'high impact families' – those who are of most concern to the Police, NHS and other agencies, as it is often the case that such families are frequently known to all agencies, but there is no whole family focus.

Major change and transformation priorities

- Redesign of our approach to targeting, based on more sophisticated use of data and intelligence, supported by qualitative work with partners. Troubled families.

Child protection

- To be effective, and be judged good or better by Ofsted, we need to be able to demonstrate:
 - Children have a plan clearly setting out the help being offered and the changes which will be needed. Social workers enable the family to understand what help they will receive, what their role is and what change will look like
 - We take seriously allegations against those working with children and take effective action
 - Our approach to child protection is sensitive to age, disability, ethnicity, gender, faith and sexual orientation
 - We take action when risks are not reducing

Our story

- High rates of children on CP plans
- High turnover – i.e. lots being made subject to CP, lots being deregistered
- We have undertaken a lot of audit and checking to understand any patterns in the decision to proceed to a child protection conference, and whether this is the right decision, as well as exploring the quality of CP plans and whether the decision to end a CP plan is the right one. Overall,

we feel that when individual cases are progressing through Section 47 investigations and the decision to move to a CP conference is being made that this is the right decision

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- From our self-analysis we believe:
 - Our decision making to instigate S47 investigations and ultimately to make children subject child protection plans is broadly sound. We have audited a number of decisions taken as evidence to support this view.
 - Our multi-agency review of child protection decisions would also suggest a large degree of alignment in understanding of thresholds, and risks by senior partners in the LSCB
 - CP plans are not always outcome focused, and therefore it can be hard for review conferences to be clear about whether sufficient progress has been made, and risks reduced.
 - We need an ongoing focus on examples where CP plans have been discontinued too soon, which have resulted in second or subsequent plans. In some cases we have looked at, this has been because there have been insufficient support plans put in place to manage situations as 'child in need' cases, families have simply been required to engage with universal services.

Our improvement agenda

Major change and transformation priorities

- No specific major change programmes. The key focus for change is to reduce the number of children subject to child protection plans. This will require the effective implementation of different approach around universal and preventative provision, earl help services and targeting of interventions.

Improvement actions

- Refine further the CP Plan format, and conference agenda to ensure a consistent focus on the issues of most concern, progress made, and risks reduced
- A consistent focus on the voice of the child, including through the use of technology where children are not attending CP conferences
- Ongoing review of decision making, through a multi-agency review process
- Quality of the CP process, including addressing inconsistencies in administration and chairing

Children in need of help and protection				
What	Why	When	Who	Comments
Referrals to social care – new thresholds document and monitoring including regular auditing of referrals not meeting threshold	To ensure clarity on thresholds for referrals and the pathway for early help support	Apr 2016	CHub	Agreed and now subject to monitoring. Key role of Hub partners to address inappropriate referrals
Implement signs of safety in assessments – to support a greater focus on assets and strengths and focus on outcomes in assessment of need and planning	To develop a bigger focus on safety and protection, and the assets of families	Ongoing	LSCB	Being rolled out from February for CP
Implement Graded care Profile 2 to assist in identifying early signs of neglect	To respond to our Neglect Strategy and the opportunity to improve early identification and support	Ongoing	LSCB	Linked to early help pathways
Child in need – review effectiveness of care planning and step down	To ensure children and families are making progress and that cases can be stepped down to Early help wherever possible	Dec 2016	AD EHPP AD SLAC	Linked to early help pathways and proposals for a step down service
Rigorous focus on case management through oversight, management and supervision, audits	To ensure effective decision making and strong case management which is based on empowered decision making and the management of risk at the right level	Ongoing	AD SLAC	Ongoing programme of audits, observations, team performance checks
Keep use of strategy meetings under review to ensure appropriate use	To ensure appropriate use and application, given that we have recent experience of higher levels of S47 than other areas	Ongoing	CSMT	Building on audit work undertaken December 2015
Focus on toxic trio of domestic abuse, substance misuse and adult mental health	To ensure we are confident that we are effectively safeguarding and supporting children where these concerns are present	Sep 2016	CSMT LSCB	Linked to early help pathways Multi-agency audit focus
CSE / VEMT / missing	ensure a strong focus on identification, assessment and planning for children at risk of exploitation and regular missing children	Ongoing	AD SLAC AD EHPP	Consistent focus on missing needed. Some weaknesses in our current ability to report on actions
YOT – develop new working model based on reducing funding and outcomes of national review	To respond to national review, reductions in funding from the Youth Justice Board, and other challenges on funding such as national probation Service	December 2016	YOT Board	Examining closer working as part of integrated targeted youth support services
Children in specific circumstances: radicalisation; homelessness; asylum seeking children	Ensuring we have the skills and capacity to ensure that children in specific circumstances are safeguarded.	Mar 2017	AD SLAC	Series of thematic reviews to identify areas for improvement
Young carers	To deliver our work on joined up working across adults and children's social care, working in partnership with our provider, Eastern Ravens Trust.	Sep 2016	CSMT	Including joint MoU on assessments
Disability and complex needs	To ensure we have a consistent and explicit focus on recording, responding and meeting the needs of children and families with disabilities and complex needs, in line	Ongoing	AD SLAC	

Child Protection Conferences – format and planning	with SEND framework To ensure a stronger focus on outcomes through Signs of Safety and restorative approaches To streamline and simplify approach to meetings and documentation to improve timeliness and reduce process Attendance of team managers at ICPC	Sep 2016	AD EHPP	
Change and transformation actions (to be reported to Children’s Board) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Children’s Hub • Review of short break provision for children with complex needs • Approach to LAC Review 				

Children in care and care leavers

Our priorities for excellence

We want to:

- Ensure decisions to bring children into care are taken using high quality assessments of risk of harm and capacity to change in families
- Ensure we listen to the views of children and young people
- Enable children and young people to return home when it is safe for them to do so
- Provide stable placements where children cannot return home
- Review care plans regularly
- Find permanent homes without unnecessary delay and minimise the number of moves children experience
- Ensure young people can access support for as long as they need it to help them prepare for and survive in adulthood

Our story

- We have relatively high numbers of children in care, compared to neighbouring and comparable authorities.
- Whilst our LAC rate has been stable for some time now, analysis of benchmarked LAC and Ceasing Care data has illustrated our relatively high 'turnover' of LAC, the large majority of whom are in care for less than a year, and a substantial proportion for less than 3 months. We have a relatively high proportion of children who are accommodated under section 20. This pattern of activity appears to be consistent with the legal framework / PLO emphasis on 'no order' and speedy resolution to permanence, although we are undertaking some further analysis to ensure we have a full understanding of this profile of 'high turnover' and of the quality of the decision making.
- Fostering: A successful recruitment campaign has increased our number of foster carers, providing improved placement choice. The recent restructuring

within Children's Services has increased capacity within the Child Placement Team enabling a greater focus on support for and oversight of foster carers. We aim to build on this positive progress by focusing on gaps in provision for specific needs, and enhancing our training and support programme to improve further the balance of our own provision compared to independent providers

- Adoption: In line with the recent trend nationally and regionally, the number of children waiting for adoption has reduced. Although some children wait longer than the national average there are specific reasons for this which are understood on a case by case basis, and evidence indicates good outcomes for children, with very few breakdowns. We have improved the rate of approving prospective adopters and currently have a number available for placements. Provision of adoption support services is supported by a contract with After Adoption

Our improvement agenda

- We have a focus on reducing the numbers of children who are in care outside Stockton, through the development of the Spark of Genius Joint Venture
- We need to continue to refine and improve the support to children in care, as well as sharpening our focus on permanence planning

Major change and transformation priorities

- The possible development of a sub-regional approach to fostering. This is a specific issue for Stockton where there is considerable reliance on independent foster care provision.
- Review of Joint venture Partnership with Spark of Genius

Children in care and care leavers

What	Detail	When	Who	Comments
Placement sufficiency planning	To ensure we meet our duties to ensure there are sufficient placements for Looked After Children.	Jun 2016	AD SLAC	To be developed as part of the LAC review and reported to MALAP as part of strategy refresh
Delivering the new LAC and care Leavers Strategy	New strategy being adopted by MALAP and CYPP: Strategy Profile New pledge for Children in care and care leavers Sufficiency	April 2016 April 2016 May 2016 May 2016	AD EHPP	
Challenge in decision making and quality of planning, including out of borough	To support safe and cost effective placement approaches through a managed process	Ongoing	CMAF	Chaired by DCS
Education and VSH	To ensure LAC have PEPS; ongoing challenge to schools; effective use of pupil premium and post 16 options	Ongoing	VSH	Role in relations to adopted children and VSH?
Health, including mental health	Timely health assessments and effective treatment and provision Recognising the particular challenges and impact on emotional health and wellbeing	Ongoing	MALAP	Review of commissioned LAC CAMHS service to determine if this should be included in wider CAMHS service. Subject to Transformation proposals and redesign
Missing from care / VEMT	To ensure we are safeguarding vulnerable children, and those at risk of exploitation	Ongoing	AD SLAC / VEMT	Quality of risk planning
Planning for care leavers	To ensure effective pathway plans are in place and to build independence	Ongoing	AD SLAC	Some issues to address in timeliness of pathway plans
Focused approaches to supporting care leavers into employment	Options for work experience; brokering placements with employers; prioritising LAC for supported employment and apprenticeship options, and the role of the Council and major organisations as employers	Ongoing	MALAP	Specific Education, Employment and Training Group
Corporate parenting	To identify and support opportunities for: volunteering; mentoring; employment and training opportunities; celebration based on the role that agencies and individuals can play	Ongoing	MALAP CMT	Range of options being explored, including role of Members
Change and transformation actions (to be reported to Children's Board) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of approach to LAC: this review will focus on the key priority of reducing the numbers of children in care, as well as the approach to reducing the cost of services to children in care. exploring edge of care, fostering and other permanence routes. The development of a sub-regional approach to adoption in response to the Government adoption agenda Spark of genius review Accommodation for vulnerable young people 				

Delivery

Accountability and reporting

2. The Children's Strategy sets out two main reporting mechanisms for change and improvement activity:
 - a. **Major change and transformation projects will report to the Children's Programme Board.** Each of these will have a lead, PID, delivery structure which will vary for different projects.
 - b. **Business improvement actions will be reported to Children's Services Management Team** (see below)

Role of groups and structures

3. Children's Services Management Team (formerly CYPMT). It will include a series of regular reports and updates, as well as implementation of the 'strategy' as a standing item. Scheduled items will include:
 - i. Monthly performance reporting (to replace the current meeting)
 - ii. Procedures, processes and systems
 - iii. Budgets, staffing and risk management
 - iv. Reports to CMT/SMT/Cabinet/Committee/Partnerships
 - v. Specific development areas / discussion items
 - b. There is therefore the opportunity to stand down the existing performance clinic. See below.
 - c. There is also the opportunity to stand down the recently established additional 'Procedures Group'. See below for further detail.
 - d. In intervening weeks there will be a business meeting of DCS and ADS
 - e. Existing social care groups, ODG and SMOG to remain, but an opportunity to consider their role and remit and fit with new proposed approaches.

Processes and procedures

4. There will be a project structure for the major change project to replace RAISE, including a Project Board, and a dedicated Project Team. This project will need to manage 2 elements:
 - a. The procurement process for a new provider
 - b. The systematic review of a range of procedures and processes to ensure these are built into the new system
5. As this latter element is fundamental to the change agenda, it will be set up as a specific project group to systematically review procedures and processes with a remit to:
 - a. Identify any immediate improvements / changes. These would be tested with the ODG as a sounding board, and then reported to CSMT for approval.
 - b. Identify any major opportunities for efficiencies and changes to ways of working. These would form the basis of the Transformation project on Lean/Systems review, led by Sue Reay.

Performance Management Framework

6. The implementation of the Children's Strategy will be underpinned by a new performance framework, made up of the following:
 - a. An increasing emphasis on the role of team managers and service managers being accountable for their own information, and using this to drive forward improvement planning in teams. There will, for example, be an improvement plan for the Reviewing Unit, with a range of indicators to measure achievement, which will form the basis for continuous improvement discussions, the generation of ideas for change etc.
 - b. Data and indicators – a simplified set of data and indicators which will be used to drive improvement. In three parts
 - i. The revised list of key performance indicators in the Council Plan – these will be reported to Cabinet and to Select Committee.

Description	2015/16 Projection	2016/17 Target
Uptake of free early education/childcare places for disadvantaged 2 year olds	79%	80%
Proportion of children aged under 5 in each Children's Centre	80%	80%
Proportion of children with overall good level of development in Early Years Foundation Stage	59%	Improve at least in line with the national rate of improvement
% of primary pupils attending good or better schools	92%	Monitor
% of secondary pupils attending good or better schools	52%	Monitor
Proportion of assessments completed in 45 days	99%	95%
Proportion of children becoming the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time, within 2 years	8%	Monitor
Proportion of looked after children in current placement for 2 years	64%	Monitor

Care leavers in EET (current 16 to 21-year-olds)	52%	55%
Average time taken between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family	611 days	Monitor
Percentage of young people aged 16-19 who are NEET or Not Known	9%	7%

- ii. A refreshed list of additional key indicators which will be used to track performance across Children's Services and will form the basis of a revised Performance report (formerly QEC), to be used in teams and to report into the Children's services management Team on a monthly basis.
- iii. Additional management information for use in teams, developed with teams
- c. Performance challenge – identifying specific performance issues for more detailed consideration and discussion at CSMT
- d. Case file audit programme
- e. Practice observation – attendance of managers (e.g. at LAC Review, CP Conference, TAF) to observe practice
- f. Annual team performance reviews
- g. Multi agency file audits and thematic reviews, led by the LSCB
- h. Front line visits by elected members.

Glossary (to be added)