

## **Working together to improve the outcomes and experiences of children, young people and their families in Stockton on-Tees: our Improvement Plan.**

Our own self-evaluation and reflection, and the outcomes of recent inspection activity demonstrates that change is needed to make a difference to the lives of children, young people and families in the Borough.

We have identified 4 major themes for improvement:

1. Our people
2. Our practice
3. Our processes
4. Our partnerships

A significant number of the actions across these themes are for SBC Children's services to deliver: challenges around the children's workforce, the quality of practice across our teams and the systems and processes we use to oversee our work are at the heart of our improvement planning. This plan sets out how we proposes to address these challenges and lay the foundations for improvement.

However, we also recognise that we cannot deliver the change that is needed in isolation, and the role and engagement of partners is crucial.

We established a 'Good and Beyond Board' following the outcome of the focused visit of our front door arrangements in September 2022, and we are retaining this structure to oversee the implementation of this improvement plan. This Board will meet monthly, with partner involvement in meetings every 2 months.

The Board will provide oversight of delivery; will monitor practice and quality; will ensure the voices and experiences of children are fundamental and will ensure performance is monitored and managed.

The plan recognises the links with other key priorities and plans, including the Council plan, the Children and Young People Plan, Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Children's Services Directorate Business Plan. It does not seek to replace or replicate these plans, but to ensure that the links are clear and understood and that action is being taken forward with sufficient pace.

The Lead member for Children's Services and the Chief Executive both sit on this Board with a remit to drive forward improvement and collective action across the system.

**Draft Improvement Plan**

**April 2023**

Outcome	Objective	Action	Success criteria	Lead Officer	Timescale	RAG rating	Links to Strategy and Detailed Action Plan
<b>Improvement Area One : Our People</b>							
<b>Ensuring we have the right people in the right place so that children, young people and families receive a consistently high quality service</b>							
1.1 A skilled, professional, and stable workforce which delivers a high quality service to children, young people, and families	There is sufficient capacity within the workforce to deliver a high quality service to children, young people, and families.  We have a competitive and effectively marketed recruitment and retention offer.	Develop a detailed action plan to support the delivery of 'Our People' workforce strategy	There is an increase in staff being recruited, retained, and continuing their professional development with Stockton-on-Tees	Jane Smith	May 23		People Strategy and action plan
		Review the use of market forces supplements for social care workforce			Sep 23		
		Develop a Children's Social Work workforce profile and review on a monthly basis	There is sufficient capacity and stability across the workforce to secure a timely and appropriate response for children and young people.		Jun 23		
		Continue to collaborate with Tees Valley and regional work on use of social work resources including use of agency staff, project teams and incentives/supplements.			Ongoing		
			There is reduced reliance on agency workers. Turnover of staff and the vacancy rate has reduced.				

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			<p>Social Workers will have manageable caseloads and team managers will not carry cases.</p> <p>Children and families will receive a consistent, high quality service which meet their needs</p> <p>Feedback from children and families is that they have developed long-term, positive, and supportive relationships with their Social Worker.</p>				

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	<p>The structure of our teams and the way in which we organise ourselves supports us to recruit and retain staff and deliver high quality services to children, young people, and families</p>	<p>Establish the ASYE academy to increase the volume and quality of newly qualified social workers working within our Children and Families teams</p>	<p>ASYEs will be supported via protected caseloads, robust supervision and support, and enhanced training opportunities</p>	<p>Adele Moore</p>	<p>Jul 23</p>		
		<p>Co-locate Children’s Services teams into one building with shared spaces, protected spaces for confidential discussion and areas for learning, based on discussion and consultation with the workforce.</p>	<p>Skills and experience will be shared across teams to enhance mutual learning</p>	<p>DCS</p>	<p>Nov 23</p>		
		<p>Review existing structures and vacant posts against emerging needs for children, young people, and families to determine if specialist posts/teams are required. This includes consideration to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contextual safeguarding team</li> <li>2. Pre birth</li> <li>3. Participation team/officer</li> <li>4. Life Story Link Officers</li> <li>5. Dedicated family support within Children &amp; Families teams</li> </ol>	<p>Staff will have opportunities to follow areas of interest and progression within the Local Authority</p>	<p>Adele Moore</p>	<p>Sep 23</p>		

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	Staff are provided with the knowledge, skills, and tools to support the development of high-quality social work practice.	<p>Develop and recruit to the Principal Social Worker post</p> <hr/> <p>Develop and deliver a Children’s Practice Development programme which focuses on assessment and analysis, planning and review, case recording and embedding the principles of the practice model, developed, and delivered with staff.</p>	Staff report that their practice development needs are recognised and met, and that they have opportunities to develop.	<p>Jane Smith</p> <hr/> <p>Jane Smith</p>	<p>May 23</p> <hr/> <p>Sep 23</p>		
1.2 There is a strong and stable leadership and management team, with succession planning in place	<p>Staff are committed to working in Stockton-on-Tees and are provided with opportunities to develop and progress</p> <hr/> <p>Team managers understand their role, responsibilities and professional accountability</p>	<p>Continually promote leadership development opportunities from first line manager to aspirant directors.</p> <hr/> <p>Develop and deliver a management and leadership programme for team manager level posts</p> <p><b>Ofsted Improvement Action 3</b></p>	<p>There is an increase in staff accessing a range of training and development opportunities, recognising the value of professional development.</p> <hr/> <p>We have retained a committed team of team managers who are implementing key elements of practice improvement including assessments and analysis, care planning</p>	<p>DCS</p> <hr/> <p>Jane Smith</p>			

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			<p>and review, quality assurance and management oversight.</p> <p>Feedback from audits evidences that team managers provide good quality management oversight and support practice development so that services can be delivered effectively.</p>				
<p>1.3 A culture which encourages respect, humility, professional curiosity, autonomy, accountability and purposeful practice, with our relationships underpinning all that we do.</p>	<p>Staff plan, learn and work together to lead the delivery of the Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Develop and deliver a programme of service-wide planning and development days, and learning from good practice reviews</p>	<p>Staff report that leadership is visible and approachable and that there is improved working across teams.</p> <p>Staff report that they feel valued and engaged.</p> <p>Staff aspire to improve practice and challenge themselves to be the best version of themselves</p>	<p>DCS</p>			

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<b>Improvement Area Two : Our Practice</b>							
<b>Ensuring that we deliver consistently high-quality and effective services to support children, young people and families to achieve improved outcomes</b>							
There is a clear vision for children, young people and families living in the borough of Stockton-on-Tees	All staff understand the Directorate’s vision for children, young people and families and their contribution in delivering this	Develop a clear service vision and mantra that threads through all we do  Set a directorate wide outcomes framework	There is a clearly articulated service vision and corresponding outcomes framework	DCS	May 23		Directorate Business Plan
Our case work is focused, timely and appropriate for the current situation within the family.  The views of children and families are reflected in all of our work.  Our interventions	We have consistently high-quality social work practice.  Our case recording is clear, timely and of high quality	Develop and embed service wide practice standards which clearly set out our expectations in relation to assessments, plans, case recording, visits, direct work, management oversight etc.  <b>Ofsted Improvement Action 1</b>  Monitor the impact of the practice standards	There is one coherent set of practice standards and accompanying training programme.  The workforce understands what the expected standards are and feels competent to implement them in everyday practice.  Quality assurance activity (including collaborative and themed audits) demonstrates that the	Adele Moore          Adele Moore	May 23          Ongoing		

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<p>are evidenced clearly.</p> <p>The quality of assessments and plans is at least consistently good across Help and Support and Social Care teams.</p>			<p>quality and consistency of assessments and planning has increased.</p> <p>Assessments include thorough analysis which supports an understanding of the context in which children are living and parental capacity to change.</p> <p>Plans are SMART with clear and specific actions and timescales.</p> <p>Children, young people and families are involved in the development of the plan.</p>				
<p>The Quality Assurance Framework is effective and there is evidence that learning from</p>	<p>The programme of quality assurance is implemented in a timely way with leaders and managers undertaking quality</p>	<p>Review the current Quality Assurance Framework against models of best practice</p>	<p>The Quality Assurance Framework drives practice development and improvement.</p>	<p>Jane Smith</p>	<p>Jul 23</p>		



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<p>quality assurance activity improves practice and influences service delivery</p>	<p>assurance activity using specified tools, identifying improvement actions and recognising common themes</p>	<p>Develop a Quality Assurance (QA) training programme to establish a shared understanding of good</p> <p>Delivery of annual QA activity programme</p> <p>Embed directorate-wide practice weeks focused on learning and development</p> <p>Introduce practice days across all service areas which focus on QA</p> <p>Quarterly QA report will be presented to Children’s Services Leadership Team and Good and Beyond Board.</p>	<p>The workforce understands what good looks like</p> <p>QA activity is completed in line with guidance.</p> <p>Themes from collaborative audit influence future thematic audit programmes.</p> <p>Evidence of QA activity and follow up actions are recorded on case files.</p> <p>Learning from QA activity improves practice.</p> <p>Evidence of impact of audit will be collated at service level, and any outstanding actions can be monitored.</p>	<p>Jane Smith</p> <p>Jane Smith</p> <p>Jane Smith</p> <p>Jane Smith</p> <p>Jane Smith</p>	<p>Jul 23</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Sep 23</p> <p>Sep 23</p> <p>Every Q</p>		

Outcome	Objective	Action	Success criteria	Lead Officer	Timescale	RAG rating	Links to Strategy and Detailed Action Plan
<p>There is support in place to enable staff to be reflective and manage their work effectively</p>		<p>Develop and embed a model of reflective supervision and an accompanying policy</p> <p>Update the supervision recording form to be more focussed and reflective</p> <p>Monitor that all staff receive regular, reflective supervision</p> <p><b>Ofsted Improvement Action 3</b></p>	<p>The supervision policy provides clarity on how reflective supervision is implemented and recorded.</p> <p>Leaders and managers understand what good reflective supervision looks like.</p> <p>Quality assurance activity identifies effective management oversight and supervision on case files</p>	<p>Adele Moore</p> <p>Adele Moore</p> <p>Adele Moore</p>	<p>Jul 23</p> <p>Jul 23</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		
		<p>Consider embedding a narrative approach (directly writing to the child/young person) when writing case notes to understand the lived experience of children and young people</p>	<p>The child/young person’s lived experience underpins assessments, planning and reviews.</p>	<p>Adele Moore</p>	<p>Jul 23</p>		
		<p>Review of approach to working with care leavers (including closer working relationships between Care Leavers and Throughcare team and the implementation of a Care Leavers pledge).</p> <p>DfE adviser review – June 23</p>	<p>Greater clarity for staff on their role</p> <p>Quality of contacts improves</p> <p>Quality of plans improves</p>	<p>Dave Willingham</p>	<p>July 23</p>		

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		<b>Ofsted Improvement Action 4</b>	Feedback more consistent				
		Grow the participation offer to extend across all of the Directorate  <b>Ofsted Improvement Action 4</b>	Clearer strategy and action plan  Feedback from young people	Jane Smith	Jul 23		
		Sufficiency and quality of placements plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential provision</li> <li>Preventative and edge of care</li> <li>Focus on reunification</li> <li>Fostering</li> </ul> <b>Ofsted Improvement Action 2</b>		Adele Moore	Ongoing		CIOC Investment Strategy  Children's Services Directorate  SBC Transformation Programme

**Improvement Area Three : Our Processes**

**Ensuring that we have the right processes and systems to support our workforce to deliver consistent, high-quality services for children, young people and families**

Outcome	Objective	Action	Success criteria	Lead Officer	Timescale	RAG rating	Links to Strategy
Case management systems are fit for purpose, user friendly and support and enable consistent and	To identify where processes and the system need to change to improve case management	Commission a diagnostic of LCS and EHM to ensure we are maximising our use of both case management systems  Review the output from the diagnostic and plan the	Our case management systems will support good practice and create more capacity for workers to spend time with families	Adele Moore  Adele Moore	May 23  Jun 23		

effective practice		implementation of required changes.					
<p>The workforce has access to appropriate, live management and performance information in a format that is meaningful and supports resource management, service planning and risk management in a timely way</p>	<p>To ensure that accurate and timely team, service, and directorate level performance information is available and accessible to inform performance management meetings</p>	<p>Create an effective, responsive, and integrated performance team that works alongside teams to analyse data and inform practice development, and continues to develop the capability and capacity of the FACE dashboard</p> <p>Embed the use of the FACE dashboard to monitor team and service level performance</p> <p>Review the Vulnerable Children’s Database to understand it’s impact on the early identification of vulnerable children and young people and if this supports risk management</p>	<p>A dashboard is in place that is used to monitor performance and enables leadership and management to measure, monitor, and manage demand, resources and processes, and risk.</p> <p>Managers and front line workers use the intelligence available to them to identify areas of concern and drive improvement</p> <p>Children’s Services Leadership Team has considered the recommendations of the review and agreed next steps</p>	<p>Ian Coxon</p> <p>Jane Smith</p> <p>Dave Willingham</p>	<p>Sep 23</p> <p>Jul 23</p> <p>Nov 23</p>		

Outcome	Objective	Action	Success criteria	Lead Officer	Timescale	RAG rating	Links to Strategy and Detailed Action Plan
<b>Improvement Area Four : Our Partnerships</b>							
<b>Ensuring that our partnership working enables consistent, high quality delivery of services to children, young people and families and leads to improved outcomes</b>							
		Develop more coherent and joined up understanding of service areas, strengths, and opportunities	Clear planning framework well known and understood.	DCS	May 23		Directorate Business Plan
		Create invest to save pot to support innovation and collaboration across teams	Business Plan developed and communicated to all teams	DCS	Jul 23		
		Refresh CYPP and develop closer understanding across partners of priorities, opportunities for collaboration and joint working	Refreshed CYPP with refreshed governance to oversee early help	Jane Smith	Jul 23		Children and Young People's Plan
		Refresh the Early / Family Help Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strategy and approach</li> <li>• lead practitioner</li> <li>• team around the school</li> </ul>	Strategic framework and clear operating procedures in place	Dave Willingham	Sep 23		Directorate Business Plan
		Identify and develop responses to key system priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion and attendance strategy</li> <li>• Emotional HWB, therapeutic and ACE</li> </ul>	Clarity on leadership, actions and issues impacting on practice for children and young people and families.	DCS and key partner agencies And partnerships  Issues to come to GABB by exception.	Nov 23  Aug 23		Directorate Business Plan  Attendance strategy  Local Inclusion Plan

Outcome	Objective	Action	Success criteria	Lead Officer	Timescale	RAG rating	Links to Strategy and Detailed Action Plan
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neurodevelopmental Pathway</li> <li>• Domestic abuse</li> <li>• Poverty and inequality</li> <li>• Integrated triage</li> </ul>			Aug 23  Jun 23 Sep 23 Oct 23		Thriving Stockton on Tees  Domestic abuse strategy and action plan  Fairer Stockton-on-Tees framework