

Oldham

Children's Services

Improvement Plan 2019-2021



Oldham
Council

Introduction

Oldham Council has the highest ambitions for our children and young people. We want Oldham to be a place where children and young people thrive. We have made significant strides to understand ourselves better and know that more needs to be done to deliver on our ambitions. Our self-assessment is an honest reflection of the outcomes achieved to date and additional work required - all of which demonstrates our commitment to improvement. There is momentum in Oldham and a strong ambition to deliver a sustainable and collective offer for our children and young people. Our approach is to critically self-evaluate and enact root and branch reform where required. We are fully supported by elected members and there is a commitment across the respective partnerships to support and co-produce improvement activity. This is reflected in the move towards bringing Children's Social Care, Early Help, Education, Early Years and Skills together under a Managing Director for Children's Services. There is a thirst for a strong strategic partnership to fully support the children and young people's agenda, across organisational boundaries, and to collectively ensure that all children and young people in Oldham thrive.

Context of improvement

There are big changes happening in Oldham as we shift our overall operating model to a place-based approach. Place based, multi-agency integration is key to the transformation and reform of public services and communities both here in Oldham and across Greater Manchester (GM). Only by developing a single approach to building resilience, that is informed by insight into what actually drives demand and shapes behaviour in communities will we shift the stubborn inequalities that exist within our borough. The learning, both locally, within GM and nationally has shown the necessity to take a different approach to building co-operative services, thriving communities and an inclusive economy.

To achieve sustainable change, we know that we have to fundamentally rethink

- the way the public sector operates, and the relationship with communities
- how we work with individuals and families with problems
- how we connect with the community to both develop community connectedness, and build confidence
- how we have potentially challenging conversations that prompt a desire for change
- how we operate as a 'system' to unblock the barriers and system conditions that prevent people being able to make good choices and to live good lives
- how we intervene earlier, prevent failure demand and escalating levels of need leading to long term system-wide savings

Children's Service's is leading the way with this system shift with the development of the Oldham Family Connect Model and is well on the journey to continuous improvement. We are relentless in our core purpose of achieving excellence for our children and young people.

The Ofsted Inspection

In January 2019 Ofsted carried out their inspection of children's services and returned a judgement of "Requires Improvement to be Good". Ofsted recognised that as a Local Authority Oldham has an accurate evaluation of the quality of social work practice and that we have well developed plans to transform services that will be secured through a structural investment plan and a new operating model. As an organisation we are self-aware and accept and embrace our challenges.

Key findings:

Children who need help and protection

Children in Oldham who are at immediate risk of harm receive services that keep them safe. For other children in need of help, the quality of social work practice across all teams is inconsistent. Although a minority of children experience good assessment and planning, for others, assessments are ineffective because they do not analyse children's needs well. This leads to ineffective planning and intervention, and a lack of improvement in children's lives, with some experiencing repeat periods of statutory involvement with little change. Although some groups of vulnerable children receive support that helps them, others wait too long to get a service that meets their needs.

Children in care and Care Leavers

Most children in care in Oldham live in stable placements with people who look after them well. Many children make good progress at school or college and receive appropriate support to meet their needs, including their emotional health and wellbeing needs. However, some children do not have up-to-date care plans that support their progress or that lead to timely permanence planning. Some children live in short-term placements for too long and, for many who are entitled to support as care leavers, pathway planning is not effective in ensuring that clear, coordinated and timely plans are developed for their future.

What needs to improve?

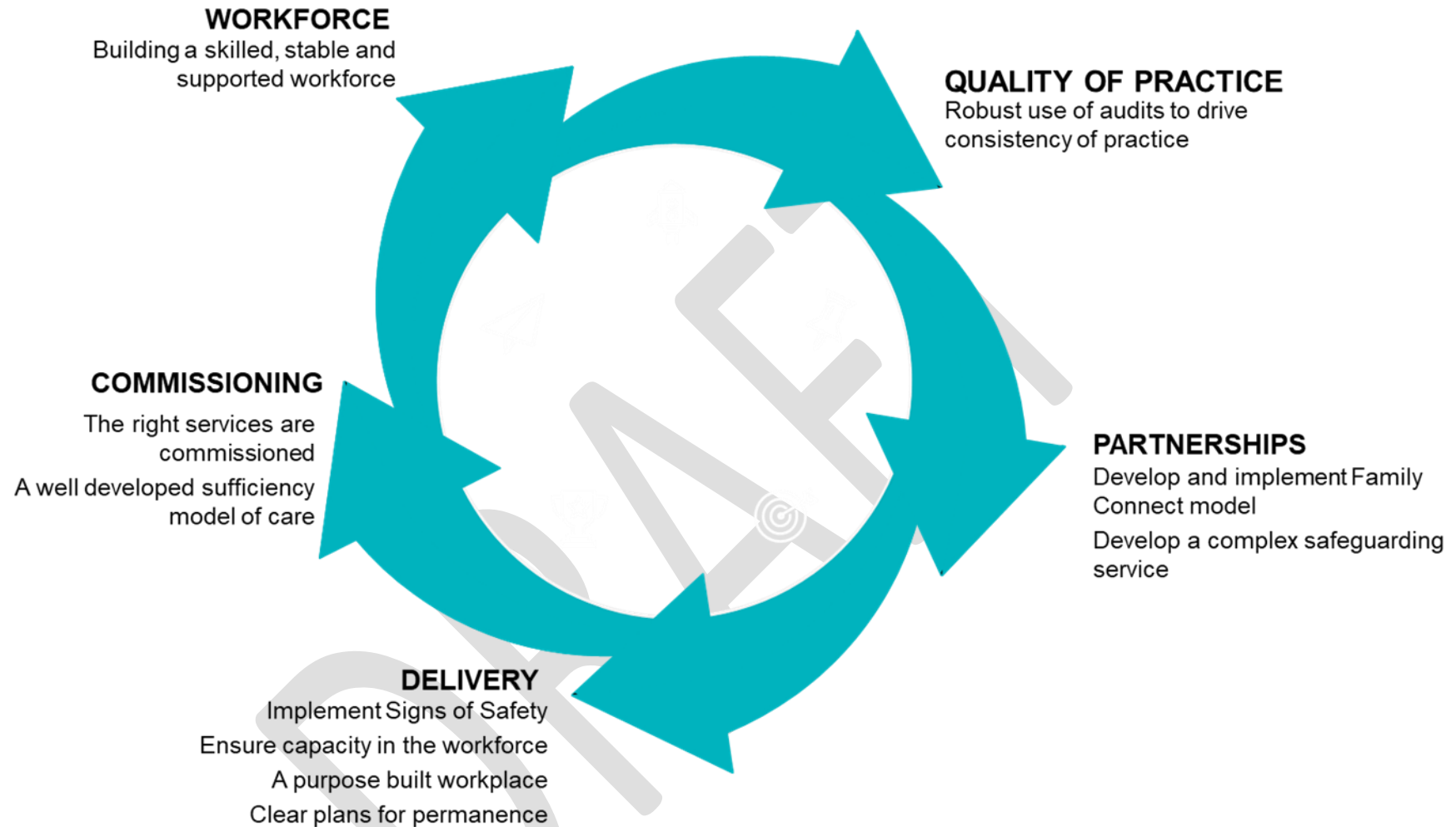
In line with our self-assessed areas for transformation and improvement Ofsted identified the following key recommendations across Standards of Practice, Practice Improvement, Learning and Development, Quality Assurance and Performance.

- The quality of assessments to effectively analyse risks and parents' capacity to meet children's needs
- Effective assessments of the needs of disabled children that lead to well-coordinated planning to meet their needs
- The quality of evidence gathering during child protection investigations
- The timeliness and effectiveness of pathway plans that lead to provision of effective support into independence
- The internal audit of practice to provide effective analysis of the impact on children
- Management oversight and practice leadership at all levels in the organisation to ensure that consistent, and good quality social work practice is in place

Improvement plan

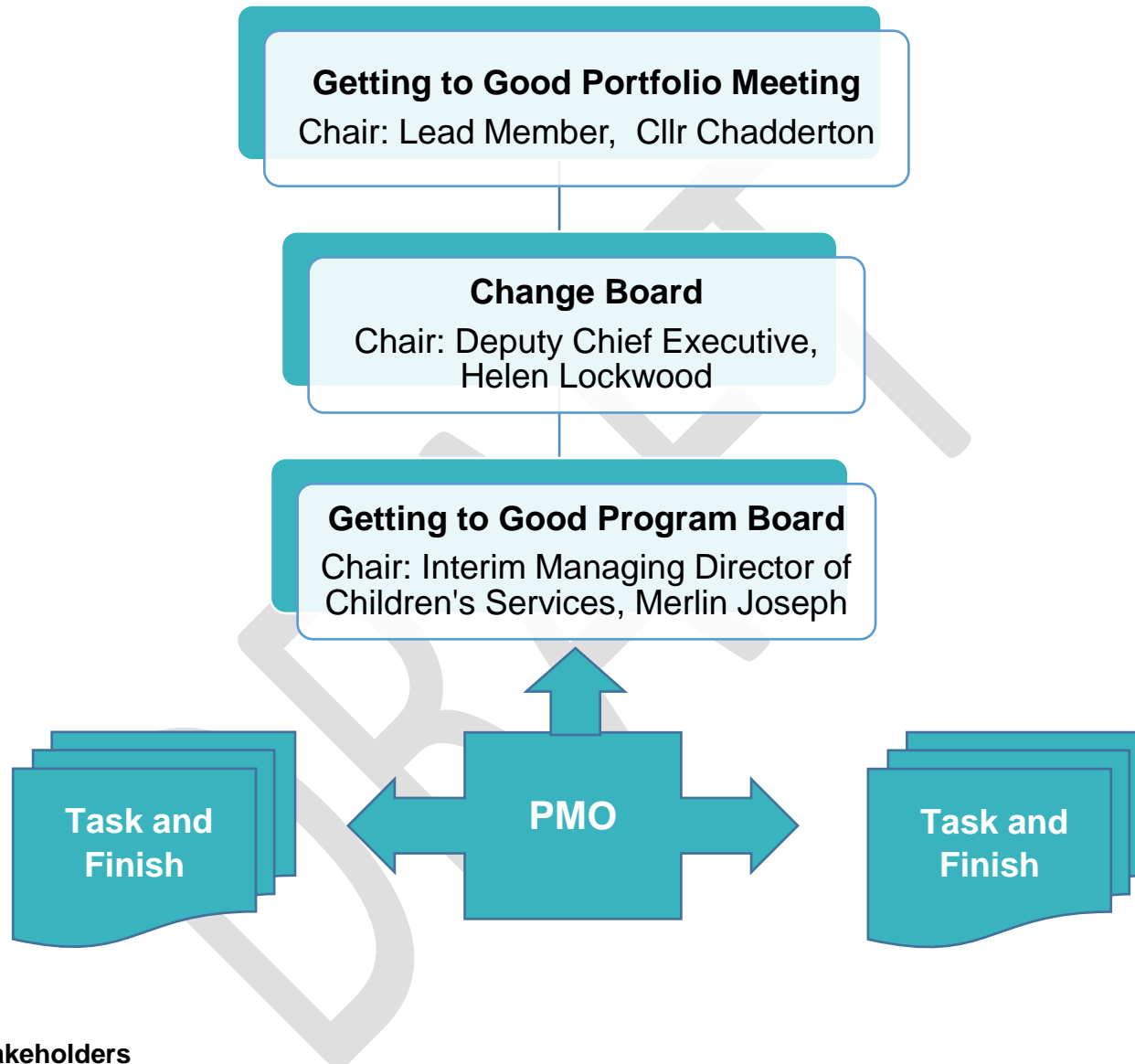
Our Children Services Improvement Plan sets out all of the development activity across children's services. The activity has been summarised below setting out the five work streams of the transformation agenda.

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Governance

The five priorities will be delivered through a range of programmes, supported by the Programme Management Office and governed through the Getting to Good Programme Board, chaired by the Managing Director of Children's Services.



Making a Difference to all stakeholders

Oldham and its partners are committed to making a difference to the lives of its children and young people, and it's really important for us to ensure that we all understand what good looks like.

Below, we have captured what this difference will look like for people involved, most importantly for children, young people and their families. We have described how this will be measured, and how we will know we have made a difference.

What does making a difference look like?	
Children and young people	Children are safer and will be helped earlier. Children will have their voice heard. We will carry out audits to ensure that this is happening. We will ask children and young people for their direct feedback and engage them in shaping services. We will monitor engagement of children and young people in their assessments, their participation in reviews and the timeliness in which we see them. Our CICC will hold us to account and challenge our performance
Parents and carers	We will work with parents to build their capacity and help them to effect and sustain change in their family's lives. Parents and carers will have their views taken into account and will own their own plans. They will see an improved early help offer and be able to work with a range of agencies to access support at an early stage to avoid issues escalating
Our partners	All professionals and voluntary agencies in the town will know how they contribute to services for children and young people, particularly in relation to prevention and early help. Together we will establish new ways of working together to safeguard children. The Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSP) will be recognised as being effective. Everyone will play a meaningful part in safeguarding
Children's workforce	All professionals working with children will be confident, competent and skilled. They will be supported to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people. They will receive regular and effective supervision and we will monitor this through surveys and audits. All workers in Children Services will be supported to work effectively with children, young people and families. Their caseloads will be manageable
Front line managers	Front line managers will provide effective management oversight and opportunities for reflective practice which contribute to better outcomes for children and young people
Senior management	Senior Managers will drive change to improve services and visibility to staff. They will ensure the appropriate governance is in place and performance is regularly monitored and that improvements are having a positive impact. They will develop effective relationships with partners to ensure the system works effectively for children and young people

Ofsted Improvement Plan: Standards of Practice

Elected members	Elected Members will hold Managers to account. They will have confidence in the workforce to deliver a safe and consistent service
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Objectives to create change	Actions	Lead officer	Timescale	Evidence of Success	Progress	RAG
The Oldham Practice Hub (OPH) will be our 'centre of excellence for social work practice'	<p>The OPH will embed social work practice standards, policies and procedures and ensure they are up to date</p> <p>The OPH will ensure all practitioners are clear about what is expected of them through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory briefing sessions • Appraisal, supervision and mid-year reviews • Induction and probation procedures • Recruitment processes 	Director of Children's Social Care	April 2019 – ongoing	<p>Increased understanding and adherence with expectations evidenced through performance data and audit findings</p> <p>100% of social workers to have an annual appraisal that meets their learning needs</p> <p>100% of social workers to have mid-year reviews that demonstrate progress</p> <p>100% of social workers to have completed the corporate induction</p>	Policies and procedures are systematically reviewed, updated and cascaded to staff	
	<p>The OPH will build on and embed a plan to operationalise the social care manager's handbook and practice standards to ensure all managers are clear about what is expected of them through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory briefing sessions • Appraisal, supervision and mid-year reviews • Induction and probation procedures • Recruitment processes 			<p>Auditing and performance reporting demonstrates consistent management foot print</p> <p>Staff report feeling supported and challenged by managers</p>		

	The OPH will analyse KPIs, national and local intelligence, including complaints, feedback from parents, carers, children and young people and where appropriate audit any emerging risk to ensure continuous impact and improvement in practice	Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding	April 2019 – ongoing	<p>Audit activity consistently evidences:</p> <p>Good care planning with clear outcomes, that measure and evaluate progress and impact for children</p> <p>Quality of assessments are consistently good</p> <p>Any dips in performance are addressed quickly and remedial action is taken</p>	<p>Performance clinics are in place and systematically use data and intelligence to inform audit assurance activity</p> <p>Any findings are scrutinised by the Quality Assurance and Performance Board</p>	
	Improve the quality of supervision through routine auditing under the QA Framework / OPH and embed good practice examples for managers (e.g. supervision policy and procedures, templates and practice observations)	Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding	April 2019 – March 2020	Auditing and staff feedback demonstrate improved quality of supervision and is reflective	<p>Auditing programme of supervision has commenced through the OPH starting with CWD</p> <p>Improving picture of supervision adherence and staff report being supported and challenged by managers</p>	
	Monitor performance around supervision and follow up on non-compliance to ensure that all practitioners are receiving sufficient support and challenge from their line managers	Director of Children's Social Care	April 2019 – March 2020	Performance data evidences staff receive regular supervision in line with policies and procedures	Roll out Tavistock/London reflective supervision for all managers	
Implementation of Social Work Methodology	Implement and embed the new social work practice model in Signs of Safety (SoS) across Children Services workforce	Director of Children's Social Care	April 2019 – March 2021	<p>Evidence from audit and observation demonstrates that Signs of Safety is consistently used in practice</p> <p>Evidence from audits demonstrate improvement in quality and impact of care planning</p>	Training has been completed by all staff in Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Leads across the partnership Pilots of case conferences and mapping of complex cases is underway	

Ofsted Improvement Plan: Practice Improvement

Objectives to create change	Actions	Lead officer	Timescale	Evidence of Success	Progress	RAG
Create a skilled stable and supported workforce at all levels who are proud to work for Oldham Council	<p>The Senior Management of Children's Services is restructured to provide fit for purpose leadership within the Council</p> <p>The new overarching Operating Model is delivered, with subsequent £12m of investment to front line services</p> <p>Stockport, Partners in Practice, to support Oldham to implement Stockport's model of value-based recruitment</p>	Chief Executive and Managing Director of Children's Services	April 2019- Sept 2019	<p>A fit for purpose senior management and leadership team is in place to oversee and drive the required improvements in Children's Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in staff turnover to 12% A stable and skilled workforce Staff report manageable caseloads 	<p>The recruitment to Senior Leadership roles to follow the appointment of the MD</p> <p>Recruitment is underway to the Operating Model (Sept 2019)</p>	
	<p>Stockport, Partners in Practice, to support Oldham Children's Services with its improvement journey.</p> <p>Areas of focus will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early permanence and care planning for children and families Working with Care leavers Workshops and observations of Stockport's practice 	Managing Director of Children's Services	June 19 – Dec 19	<p>Audit activity consistently evidences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing drift and delay in permanency Good care planning with clear outcomes, that measure and evaluate progress for children Care Leavers pathway plans lead to effective transition to independence Managers of staff know "what good looks like" 	<p>MOU and Action plan agreed with Stockport Council</p> <p>Programme of work commenced in June 2019</p>	
	Improve the quality of assessments	Director of	April 2019-	Audit activity demonstrates	Programme of audits	

	<p>to effectively analyse risk and parents capacity to meet their children's needs through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice learning sets • Reflective group supervision • Live audit and dip sampling of assessments • Research in Practice workshops • Suite of evidence based practice tools e.g. Graded Care Profile; Restorative Practice and Signs of Safety 	Children's Social Care	Sept 2020	<p>improvements in the analysis, quality of assessments and improved care planning</p> <p>Baseline audits of assessments for CIN, CP and CLA are judged Good or Outstanding:</p> <p>55% by October 2019 70% by June 2020 85% by Sept 2020</p> <p>S47 enquiry moving into an ICPC in the past 12 months is in line with Statistical Neighbours</p>	on quality of assessments underway and ongoing	
	<p>Improve the quality of written plans across the service to ensure they are SMART, child focused and include contingency plans.</p> <p>To Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in Need (CIN) Plans • Child Protection (CP) • Care Plans for CLA • Pathway Plans <p>Assure impact through bi-monthly thematic case audits</p>	Director of Children's Social Care	April 2019- Sept 2020	<p>Audits demonstrate improvements in the quality of plans and contingency planning</p> <p>Performance data evidences an improvement in the number of children and young people with a SMART plan across all services</p> <p>Improved outcomes for Children and Young People</p> <p>Baseline audits of CIN, CP and CLA plans judged Good or Outstanding:</p> <p>55% by October 2019 70% by June 2020 85% by Sept 2020</p>	<p>All social workers and first line managers have /will be trained in SMART planning</p> <p>Ongoing audit activity to measure progress</p>	
Improving Practice in the Children's with	Continue to improve the quality of assessments for the Children with Disabilities Team that lead to well-co-	Director of Children's Social	April 2019- March 2020	Audit activities demonstrates improved management footprint, quality of practice and SMART	Completed cycle of quality assurance activity which shows	

Disabilities Team	<p>ordinated planning to meet their needs through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Working with children with disabilities in the 21st Century” training to be delivered by Research in Practice Live Audit / coaching to drive improvements 	Care		<p>planning</p> <p>Baseline audits of plans for Children with a Disability are judged Good or Outstanding:</p> <p>55% by October 2019 70% by January 2020 85% by March 2020</p>	<p>an improving picture</p> <p>12 week improvement action plan is in place</p> <p>Cycle of audit activity will be repeated(Sept 19) to ensure improvements are maintained</p>	
	Operationalise the additional Service Manager role for Children with Disabilities into the new operating model to strengthen management expertise and practice support	Director of Children’s Social Care	April 2019-October 2019	Audit activity demonstrates improved management footprint and quality of practice Staff understand their role, report feeling supported and challenged	The role will be permanently recruited to as part of the structural investment plan	
Pathway Planning	<p>Improve the timeliness and quality of pathway planning to ensure that plans are up to date and lead to effective support into independence This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional personal advisors to work with the allocated social worker to support pathway planning from 15 years of age Dedicated IRO to chair reviews post 18 years Continue to track the timeliness and quality of pathway plans 	Director of Children’s Social Care	April 2019-June 2020	<p>Audits demonstrate timeliness and quality of pathway plans</p> <p>100% of young people aged 15 years 9 months and above will have a up to date pathway plan that will be reviewed bi-annually</p>	Action learning sets are in place across the Quality Assurance Unit and Fieldwork Teams to support and challenge the improvements of pathway planning	
	Monitor the impact of the ‘Staying Put’ offer to test whether this is allowing more young people who wish to do so stay with their foster carers	Assistant Director of Children in Care	April 2019-Ongoing	More Care Leavers are in ‘Staying Put’ arrangements	Young People in foster care are being supported with ‘Staying Put’ arrangements	
	Continue to work with Housing	Director of	February	Care Leavers tell us they are	Programme of work	

	Colleagues to ensure appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers so they can live independently if they are ready to do so and have a place to call home	Children's Social Care	2020	supported to live independently	agreed and programme plan will be completed by February 2020	
	Re-launch the Care Leavers Local Offer and ensure Care Leavers understand their entitlements	Director of Children's Social Care	30 Sept 2019	Care Leavers tell us they understand their entitlements and know how to access them	Children in Care Council are helping to improve the Local Offer for Care Leavers	

Ofsted Improvement Plan: Learning and Development

Objectives to create change	Actions	Lead officer	Timescale	Evidence of Success	Progress	RAG
Improved Management Oversight And Practice Leadership	<p>The Learning from the Social Workers' Health Check, annual performance appraisals and corporate L+D plans will be incorporated into the workforce training and development plan</p> <p>Launch and deliver the Learning and Development Offer</p>	Director of Children's Social Care	June 2019 - March 2020	<p>Staff report they are satisfied with the induction programme</p> <p>Staff feedback they are aware of L+D opportunities</p> <p>100% of managers have undertaken supervision CPD</p> <p>100% of managers have undertaken Leadership and Management CPD</p>	<p>Annual PPF to be completed in May 2019 and training plan developed to meet needs in June 2019</p> <p>Senior Managers have responded to any feedback e.g. new accommodation identified for social workers by Sept 2019</p>	
	The Oldham Practice Hub will operate as a virtual and physical space, with a clear design identity and is marketed through social media and other digital platforms	Director of Children's Social Care	Sept 2019-ongoing	<p>Staff will engage and use the Oldham Practice Hub to improve social work practice</p> <p>Social Workers will have access to high quality learning and training materials that supports good social work practice</p>	The Oldham Practice Hub has been launched and leads on audit assurance activity, R & R, provides practice briefs, guidance, training and development	

	<p>Research in Practice will provide mandatory training workshops for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and critical thinking in assessment • Building emotional resilience in the Children's and Families Service (Team Managers) • Leading and championing evidence informed practice (Middle Managers development Programme) • Reflective supervision • Impact of culture and diversity in practice 	Director of Children's Social Care	April 2019 – March 2020	<p>Audit activity will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and critical thinking in assessments • Evidence of improved information gathering during child protection investigations resulting in more appropriate outcomes • Quality of assessments are consistently good 	<p>Research in Practice have undertaken an analysis of the Ofsted report and recommendations and have identified mandatory training and workshops</p>	
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Ofsted Improvement Plan: Quality Assurance

Objectives to create change	Actions	Lead officer	Timescale	Evidence of Success	Progress	RAG
A strong quality assurance framework to assist the Council to deliver and efficient and effective service	<p>The OPH will embed the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and lead the cycle of assurance audit activity, through an annual programme of thematic audits to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Practice • Voice of the Child • Cultural Diversity • CP Decision Making (S47 processes) 	Director of Children's Social Care	Quarterly updates	<p>Single and multi-agency audit of practice will provide effective analysis of the impact on children</p> <p>Cases will consistently demonstrate good quality assessments that leads to SMART plans and contingency planning</p> <p>The quality of evidence gathering during Child Protection enquiries will support good decision making</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Framework launched</p> <p>The Children's Assurance Board is established and oversees performance and audit outcomes</p>	
	<p>To implement and embed a Young Inspectors Programme (age 15-25) to contribute to the quality assurance of provisions for Children and Young people to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care Leaver's Local Offer • Residential Homes • Fostering and Adoption • Virtual School • Health Services / Mental Health 	Director of Children's Social Care	Sept 2019 – Ongoing	<p>Children in Care Council tells us that we have listened and heard their views on the quality of services and act upon their recommendations</p> <p>Audit evidence demonstrates improvements in the quality of provision</p>	Children in Care Council are presenting the Young Inspectors proposal to June's Corporate Parenting Panel	
	Embed a more systematic tracking and monitoring process for Public Law Outline to minimise delays for children and improve timeliness	Director of Children's Social Care	October 2019	<p>More children have a clear plan for permanence</p> <p>Auditing demonstrates fewer delays in achieving permanence 90% of children will have a permanency plan at second LAC review</p>	Action learning sets are in place across Quality Assurance Unit and Fieldwork Teams to support and challenge permanence planning	

	Continue to develop auditors and moderators with shared understanding of “ <i>what good looks like</i> ” through workshops with social workers and managers	Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding	April 2019-Ongoing	Shared understanding of “ <i>what good looks like</i> ”	Workshops delivered through the Oldham Practice Hub	
	Monitor and challenge the compliance of remedial action from case audits	Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding	April 2019-Ongoing	Remedial actions from audits are completed and demonstrate improvements in the quality of outcomes for children and young people and case recording	The Quality Assurance Board is established and oversees quality of audit and performance	
	Quarterly “spotlight deep dive clinics” and bi-annually practice weeks leads to improved compliance with service standards and quality of practice	Managing Director of Children’s Services	April 2019-Ongoing	Performance data and audit activity demonstrates improvements in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team performance • An accurate picture of quality • Senior Leaders have a good understanding of performance and quality of practice 	The Quality Assurance Board is established and oversees quality of audit and performance	