



Children's Services

Ofsted Action Plan

July 2024





The key recommendations identified by Ofsted:

-  The stability and capacity of the workforce, to support manageable workloads and consistency for children
-  Placement and accommodation sufficiency for children in care and care leavers
-  The quality, consistency, and timeliness of assessments
-  Achieving permanence for all children in care and, in particular, strengthening the support for special guardianship orders
-  Transition planning for care leavers
-  The responsiveness of out-of-hours support
-  the consistency of support for 16-17 year old children presenting as homeless

Aligned with the Ofsted recommendations and the direction of travel for Cambridgeshire's Children, Education and Families (CEF) services, our key principles will be to make rapid improvement and ensure consistency of our core functions across our services. Cambridgeshire will ensure there is a collaborative approach with partners as one united multi-agency workforce to ensure safe and sound practice across the system. We will measure our performance and, more importantly, the impact and outcomes for children, young people and their families, ensuring their voices are heard and influence continuous improvement. Cambridgeshire will thrive to become an 'Outstanding' children services local authority.



The following correlates with each of the recommendations from Ofsted and outlines Cambridgeshire’s key actions for making improvements in each of these areas

1. WORKFORCE

No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
1.1	<p>Building Capacity: Staff capacity, capability and resilience are continuously strengthened. This allows the multi-agency workforce to realise their full potential and ensure that we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the right professional with • the right skills in • the right roles/place at • the right time at • the right cost within budget • to support manageable workloads and consistent, stable services for children 	Practice is increasingly consistent due to the increase in the permanent workforce with manageable workloads, all of whom work within a culture of continuous personal and team improvement.	Executive Director: Children, Education & Families (CEF)	March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the number of agency staff to 15% • Reduction in caseloads to a maximum of 25 in Assessment (<i>upto 20 in other teams</i>) • Decrease in the number of staff avoidably leaving Cambridgeshire • Understanding and bridging the skills-gap within the workforce • Continuous professional development increases with customised learning programmes 	Caseloads reducing currently at 29 during July 24 (Jan = 40+)



No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
1.2	Structuring Work: Children, Education & Families (CEF) is structured to deliver our ambitions. Roles are designed to deliver our objectives and creating interesting work for people, encouraging collaborative ways of working.	Preventative services have been redesigned to better align to collaborate with specialist areas of children social care and partners	Executive Director: Children, Education & Families (CEF)	March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in the number of repeat referrals made into the service Retention of staff continues to increase Reduction in the number of children and young people coming into care 	In July 2024 26.9% (a decrease since December 2023 which was 35.97%)
1.3	Managing outcomes: Objectives within Children, Education & Families (CEF) are fully aligned, performance is measured, and feedback is used to change and transform services	<p>Evaluation of impact of learning and development</p> <p>Performance Improvement</p> <p>Measure and report on return of investment</p>	All Children, Education & Families (CEF) Directors	December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big six spotlight areas lead to improvement in case recording and outcomes Reduction in caseloads to a maximum of 25 in Assessment (<i>upto 20 in other teams</i>) Increase in cases reaching timelines Reduction in sickness absence 	Caseloads reducing currently at 29 during July 24 (In January 2024 these were 40+)



No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
1.4	Delivering continuous improvement: There is a focus on continuous improvement. Our people use internal and external sources to come up with new ideas and approaches, supported by a culture that encourages innovation.	<p>There is continuous improvement in caseload management, quality and timeliness of workload by:</p> <p>Updating and upgrading in accuracy and quality within our Self-Assessment on a 6-monthly basis</p> <p>Sector Led Improvement Programme (SLIP) input contributes to continuous improvement</p> <p>Progressive use of</p>	All Children, Education & Families (CEF) Directors	January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff accessing and utilising business intelligence to better understand their areas and to improve levels of assessment, analysis and interventions Business systems are accurately recording information within the establishment with increasing oversight and analysis Quality and timeliness of assessments have improved Reduction in caseloads to a maximum of 25 in Assessment (<i>upto 20 in other teams</i>) 	<p>Access has now been rolled out to Managers to access this information regularly</p> <p>Training with managers is being undertaken</p> <p>Caseloads reducing currently at 29 during July 24 (Jan = 40+)</p>



No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
		<p>feedback from those using our services which show the impact of our work on their lived experience</p> <p>Children, Education & Families (CEF) audit activity highlights areas for focus</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from staff (health check & surveys) provides continuous improvement and improved emotional wellbeing for staff • Voice of the child more evident throughout the child's journey 	



2. PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY

No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
2.1	Residential strategy and sufficiency strategy are refreshed to ensure placement availability and affordability - Explore and identify properties to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)	The right accommodation to meet need is identified and implemented	Head of Children's Commissioning	December 24	Sufficient accommodation placements are available when required	
2.2	Increase in-house foster carers - Refocusing fostering campaign in line with sufficiency need.	Foster homes are available for those coming into care	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	March 25	Increase in the number of foster carers by 7 <i>(subject to panel approval by October 24)</i>	
2.3	Increasing emergency placements for children coming into care	The right accommodation to meet need is identified and implemented	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	March 25	Specialist carers are trained and in place to support children with high complex needs in an emergency	By September 2024, we will have four carers who are approved to support children with highly complex needs in an emergency
2.4	Implement the mocking-bird model	Building better relationships between children, young people and foster families	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	January 2025	Children living with foster carers build confidence, resilience within a caring community	



No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
2.5	Provider framework for 16+ & 18+ accommodation (pricing and service delivery framework)	The right accommodation to meet need is identified and implemented	Head of Children's Commissioning	March 25	Sufficient and affordable placement availability	A provider has been identified and in place since 1 st July 2024
2.6	Quality assurance of placement sufficiency in place and established	Effective monitoring has been established to ensure continuous improvement	Service Director: Quality Assurance & Practice Improvement	March 25	Collaborative working across services to ensure improvements are recognised and made	



3. ASSESSMENTS

No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
3.1	Service Redesign to be in line with geographical demand and review of key processes, particularly in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - Early help / targeted support 	Ability to meet demand	Service Director: Children's Social Care	March 25	Improved quality, consistency and timeliness of assessments	New MASH screening template in place from end of August 2024
3.2	Create and increase capacity where needed to meet ongoing and future particularly within MASH & Assessment	Ability to meet demand	Service Director: Children's Social Care	March 25	Improved quality, consistency and timeliness of assessments	Managers to use 10 days oversight to review level of intervention/assessment
3.3	Training on the key big-six areas	All professionals have a consistent approach to the big six areas	Service Director: Children's Social Care	October 24	Improved quality and consistency across the workforce	Consistent training from Learning and Development Service Meetings and bite-size sessions being offered to teams and service.
3.4	Continued work on threshold consistency and building better partnership working and joint processes to meet need	Thresholds are understood and consistent across partner agencies, mostly delivered through collaborative conversations	Service Director: Children's Social Care	March 25	Improved quality and efficiency of referrals	



No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
3.5	Ensuring quality assurance to understand practice quality and assessment needs	increases in depth, analysis and clear coverage of the key domains	Service Director: Children's Social Care & Service Director Quality Assurance & Practice Improvement	March 25	In-service Audits are undertaken regularly with some collaborative multi-agency audits and audits which include children and families where possible.	Audits have taken place during July 2024 and will be included in service action plans going forward



4. PERMANENCE

No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
4.1	Develop, agree and implement permanence planning protocol	Clear and shared understanding of how permanence will be achieved	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	May 2024	Improved timeliness and quality of permanence planning	This is finalised and approved by the Directorate Management Team (DMT)
4.2	Permanence tracking panel fully operational and joined up approach for children in care and embed pre-proceedings meeting (PPM) into the overarching processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review criteria - Streamline processes - Joined up approaches - Linked to tracking on business systems 	<p>Clear tracking of permanence arrangements</p> <p>Less churn of social workers for children in care</p> <p>Continuously improving placement stability</p> <p>Sufficient oversight to ensure each child in care has a special person they trust</p>	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	September 24	Improved timeliness and quality of permanence planning	
4.3	Quality assurance for Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) work	Review audit of Permanence has been completed and key areas identified for focus	Service Director: Quality Assurance & Practice Improvement	October 2024	Improved timeliness and quality of permanence planning	Analysis report of DRPs completed in August 2024



5. CARE LEAVERS

No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
5.1	Improve the Pathway plan completion rate	Pathway plans are completed within time with audits showing increasing quality Equity of service between 16–25-year-olds	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	March 25	Increase to the completion rate of pathway plans within timescale	
5.2	Update and relaunch the Local offer website. Ensure the involvement of young people to co-produce the local offer	Care Leavers have access to additional support needed to start their adulthood.	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	September 2024	Information is easily accessible and available to young people	Working with Young People currently
5.3	Enhance preparation for independence support to young people from 14 years	Care leavers feel fully support and prepared for leaving care	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	November 2024	Appropriate capacity is in place to start support from 14+	Working with young people, foster carers and internal colleagues
5.4	Launching 'Education, employment and training' (EET) empowerment forum to support young people	Care leavers feel fully support and prepared for leaving care	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	May 24	Young People are clear of where to gain support for 'Education, employment and training' (EET)	Complete



No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
5.5	Develop apprenticeship/work experiences opportunities for Care Leavers (Levels 1,2 and 3 offered with preparation)	Care leavers feel fully support and prepared for leaving care	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	October 24	A clear and transparent process for Care leavers to access work and training opportunities	Work Experience has been completed. Working on the apprenticeship opportunities
5.6	Working with District Councils for a clear Housing pathway for Care Leavers	Care leavers feel fully supported through their future accommodation needs No Care Leavers in unsupported accommodation unless this is assessed as unnecessary	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	December 24	Accommodation needs for Care Leavers are clear and transparent	Band A bidding agreed for Care Leavers with a start date currently being agreed.
5.7	Strengthening our processes for oversight on emergency placements (inc Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs))	A seamless process for emergency placements	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	March 25	Reduced rate of use of B&Bs	Tracking is in place. All young people will be presented to External Placement Panel for oversight
5.8	Allocation of Personal Advisors at 17 ½ years old	Care Leavers feel fully support and prepared for leaving care	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	September 24	Appropriate capacity is in place to support Care Leavers	Six Personal Advisors have been appointed



No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
5.9	Increase Voice of Care Leavers to influence policy and service design	Care Leavers feel fully heard to influence future service redesign	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	ongoing	Voice of the Care Leavers can be evidenced	Work in progress
5.10	Corporate Parenting Strategy	Care Leavers feel fully heard <i>(to note the corporate parenting strategy applies to all children equally, whatever their age)</i>	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	October 24	Voices of Care Leavers can be evidenced throughout the Corporate Parenting strategy	
5.11	Improved and earlier preparation planning for transition planning 16/17 year-olds in care	Care leavers feel fully support and prepared for leaving care	Service Director of Corporate Parenting, Fostering & Adoption	September 24	Appropriate capacity is in place to support Care Leavers	

6. OUT-OF-HOURS SUPPORT

No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
6.1	Review the effectiveness, timeliness and practice of the current Emergency Duty Team (EDT) service and their delivery of out of hours support (i.e. agreements etc)	Emergency Duty Team (EDT) are reviewed and a future plan in place	Service Director: Children's Social Care	December 2024	Out of hours support is consistent	This is currently under review



7. HOMELESSNESS 16-17 YEAR OLDS

No	Item	Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Success criteria	Progress
7.1	Review current process and practice to ensure a joined-up approach with services and partners (including District housing).	Consistent approach across services for handling with homelessness of 16/17 year old	Service Director: Children's Social Care	November 24	Better support in place to assist 16/17 years old who are homeless	There is a shared draft protocol has been reviewed and this includes collaborative intervention between Housing and Children's Social Care. Awaiting final approval
7.2	Ensure access to advocacy which includes 16/17 homeless when assessment takes place to ensure clear transparent understanding and advice	Young people feel supported	Service Director: Children's Social Care	December 24	Better support in place to assist 16/17 years old who are homeless Better recording on local children's system to ensure continuous improvement	