



# Update on Children's Services' Inspection & Improvement Activity

Report for Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee  
July 2021

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# Purpose

- Recap on our Improvement Journey to date
- Update on areas of focus since January 21
- Overview of most recent Ofsted visit & feedback
- Overview of recent DfE review & feedback
- Update on key priorities for next 3 months



# Introduction – A brief recap on 2019 findings

- March 2019 – Full Ofsted ILACS Inspection  
Overall judgment: Inadequate

Some of the areas highlighted as needed improvement included:

- Senior leaders' understanding of the quality of social work practice, management oversight at all levels of social work practice.
- The response to all children referred to Front Door to ensure timely review and effective decision-making.
- The quality of social work assessment and plans.
- The response to children who go missing.
- The way in which all staff and managers listen to the voice of children to inform individual work and wider service development.

# Ofsted Activity

- October 2019 – First Monitoring Visit; focused on front door and saw improvements
- March 2020 – Second Monitoring Visit scheduled but postponed (due to the Covid pandemic)
- March 2021 – Focused Assurance Visit under COVID inspection framework

The purpose of this visit was :

- to seek assurance regarding the help, support and protection we have provided during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Our leadership and management during the pandemic

.....This means we have had less monitoring and scrutiny than we should have and the way Ofsted have done this has been different



# How we are managing our improvement activity

Task & Finish Groups / Work on Ambitions Plan

Work Stream Meeting – Reviews action plan & progress.  
Workstream Lead produces a Highlight Report

Highlight Report presented to Steering Group

Steering Group oversees & drives work forward & reports  
progress to Improvement Board

Improvement Board meets every 6 weeks



TRAFFORD  
COUNCIL



# Areas of Focus – 2021

We have used our refreshed Ambitions plans to continue to drive forward improvement.

We have 8 Ambitions with dedicated leads and task and finish work sitting within each of these areas.

Key areas of focus have included :

**Leadership and management grip**

**Quality of practice**

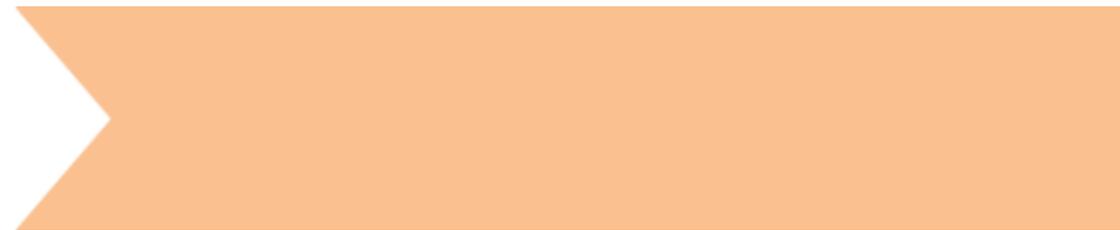
Full details of our 8 Ambitions can be accessed on the website:

[Link to Ambitions/Improvement Plan](#)





# Key Areas of Activity & Focus Since January





## Management Grip & Quality Assurance



- Our revised **Quality Assurance Framework** is now operational; everyone's business and part of the day job.
- A programme of **coaching and support** has been implemented at all levels – “show and tell.” Our approach to QA has a coaching approach as a foundation, led by Strategic Lead, Practice Improvement & Learning.
- We are starting to embed a culture of audit across the majority of services – audits happening and being moderated
- We are developing our **shared sense of what ‘good’ looks like**





## Management Grip & Quality Assurance

- A programme of lunch and learn sessions has been co-ordinated so we start to target learning based on the findings of audits – developing a culture of **learning together and strengthening practice**; closing the learning loop
- We have started **Multi Agency Audits** – to help us improve the way that we work as a partnership and understand each other's practice.
- A **live Multi Agency Audit** is planned in July at our front door
- **Conversational audits** with children and families; the first of which were undertaken in June.





# Leadership and Governance



- We have had a focus on strengthening our governance and partnership working.
- We have refreshed the Trafford Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (TSSP) arrangements – our collective Safeguarding arrangements. This includes stepping back up our Safeguarding Effectiveness Board – to monitor how well the partnership is doing.
- We have established a series of partner liaison meetings with our Schools and Police
- We have strengthened and stood back up the Start Well Board

..... this means that we are collectively owning and understanding what is happening for our children and what we need to





## Workforce – Investing in our people

- In March 2021 we initiated a consultation process for Phase 1 of a whole service Redesign - significant staff engagement.
- Intention of which is to organise the service in a way that supports best practice by:
  - Minimises the number of changes of key worker for children & young people,
  - Strengthens ownership and trust at every level
  - Enables better collaboration across services and the partnership
  - Is practice, impact & outcome focused (Not process driven)
  - Puts children, young people and families at the centre of all that we do.
- Ended consultation in June and moving into implementation
- We have implemented a **Market Factor Supplement** for level 3 social workers and advanced practitioners to support recruitment and retention of experienced staff
- We have recruited a new relational practice partner. **Strengthening Practice** to work alongside us for a minimum of three years
- We are developing our **Investors in People Strategy**

# Quality of Practice

- Continued to have a forensic focus on **practice**
- Continued focus on back to basics - frequency & quality of **social work visits**
- Developed systems and processes with **schools in respect of vulnerable children** and school attendance .
- **Rolling out Child Impact Chronologies (CImCS)** - to help understand the impact of children's lived experiences and what needs to happen to keep them safe, informing assessments and plans.
- **Introduced Child Journey Meetings** – a strength based approach to 'stand in the child's shoes' and influence risk based planning
- **Revising and developing our Supervision Framework** – work being led and driven by practitioners for practitioners . Key part of our Investing in People Approach
- **Prototyping new Early Help arrangements** (Trafford Team Together )– right help, right time , right way





# Ofsted focus Visit - March 2021

The visit was conducted under the ILACS framework- but methodology adapted

Ofsted looked at social work practice through a lens of “lived experience during Covid”

It had a “broad scope and a narrow focus” – looking at management decision making across whole service

A team of 5 inspectors including Education HMI

The 12 day process 23<sup>rd</sup> February with two days of fieldwork on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March

Involvement of partners was limited but did meet with 4 Schools leads, 3 foster carers, some care leavers but looked at partnership working through the lens of social work case work

Final letter published 10<sup>th</sup> May (delayed because of pre-election period). Received detailed feedback back during the inspection and at the end of the 2 days

.....Ofsted were assessing progress we have made since our ILACS, in a Pandemic.



# Headlines

- We know ourselves well – we have an accurate understanding of the quality and what need to improve; significant change from 2019 ILACS
- Critically, we have plans in place and are doing something about it.
- The Quality Assurance Framework and ways we understand quality of social work practice is embedded “[we] have achieved volume and it is systematic and regular”
- We have more to do to ensure it influences practice – especially through our front line and middle managers - meaning our practice is still too variable
- Ofsted were clear we have good decision making and assurance at the Front Door
- We are developing a culture of being open, open to learning



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# Some positives

- We have worked well with partners to have a strong response to COVID. This includes the systems between CSC and school in respect of vulnerable children and our support in terms of emotional well being.
- We have continued to see our children regularly through the pandemic
- Systems and processes at the front door have continued to be strengthened -well organised and have needs appropriately considered; good information sharing.
- Decision making in respect of thresholds – appropriate especially where children are at risk or serious harm
- Assessments within Section 47 processes are thorough
- Partnership working was seen as a strength – and our schools were positive about working with CSC social workers and that of the virtual school
- CME and EHE – service to our children were seen as effective
- Children at risk of exploitation – Shine team effective in terms of reducing risk - less effective if support is not provided by this service



# Areas for Improvement



- Management grip and QA influencing practice – managers outside of the leadership team not driving this - this includes the IRO and CP chairs
- Ensuring we have the right partners at the initial strategy meeting – consequence of having multiple strategy meetings is building in delay
- Contingency plans need to be strengthened – means we are being reactive and crisis driven – includes pre-proceedings work
- Measures of success – tend to be task focused and whether there has been compliance not sustainable change. Still not considering the child's full history – means we are being reactive
- Strength of step down work where a social work assessment has not been completed – something we need to work on together – links to our redesign
- Our ambition and vision for care leavers – quality of plans being task focused and unclear. Our care leavers were not positive about the support they received



# Our thoughts

- Pleased that we know ourselves well and are doing something about it!
- Feel it is right that Ofsted recognise we are doing things differently – including how we work together with our partners
- Pleased that the culture change is being recognised – but still more to do
- Absolutely agree we have more to do – And that we need to progress at pace
- We know workforce stability is a “wicked” issue – our redesign is an enabler in terms of stabilisation. Ofsted told us to get in with it!
- Management grip is about ownership not just numbers
- Great that we are on the right path
- Sad our care leavers (that Ofsted heard from) think we are getting it wrong

**We are embracing the feedback and we will be asking for your help with our Ambitions plan**



## DfE Progress Review February – May 2021

- The review was conducted virtually and in a phased way
- It included meeting with Leadership team, partners, some staff & a staff survey.

***“The service has continued to improve throughout the last six months and the council remains driven and committed to improving outcomes for the children, young people and families of Trafford. Although all meetings were held virtually, discussions with partners, staff and political / senior leadership added a valuable dimension to our overall picture of progress, and we are grateful to all those who gave up their time to participate in our discussions.”***

- The findings of this review have been submitted to the Minister



## DfE – General Observations

- They stated that Trafford feels encouragingly different to the Council they experienced at the start of intervention
- They were reassured to hear leaders and partners remain fully committed and that there is also recognition that there is still a long way to go
- They commented on strong corporate and political commitment to Children's Services in Trafford and that children remain at the forefront of priorities.
- They noted the strength and ability of the new leadership team.
- They saw a commitment to joint working from our partners and a sense of shared ownership of our improvement journey – very different and talk of “we”





## They also recognised however that:

- Pace with implementing improvements had initially been slow – but had picked up and continued during the Pandemic .
- Inconsistent practice remains a challenge – but we are doing something about it
- There continued to be issues at times around communication
- Retention and recruitment of staff is a significant challenge and we need to ensure we support and nurture our staff throughout this change
- Redesign seen as positive but some risks in respect of workforce



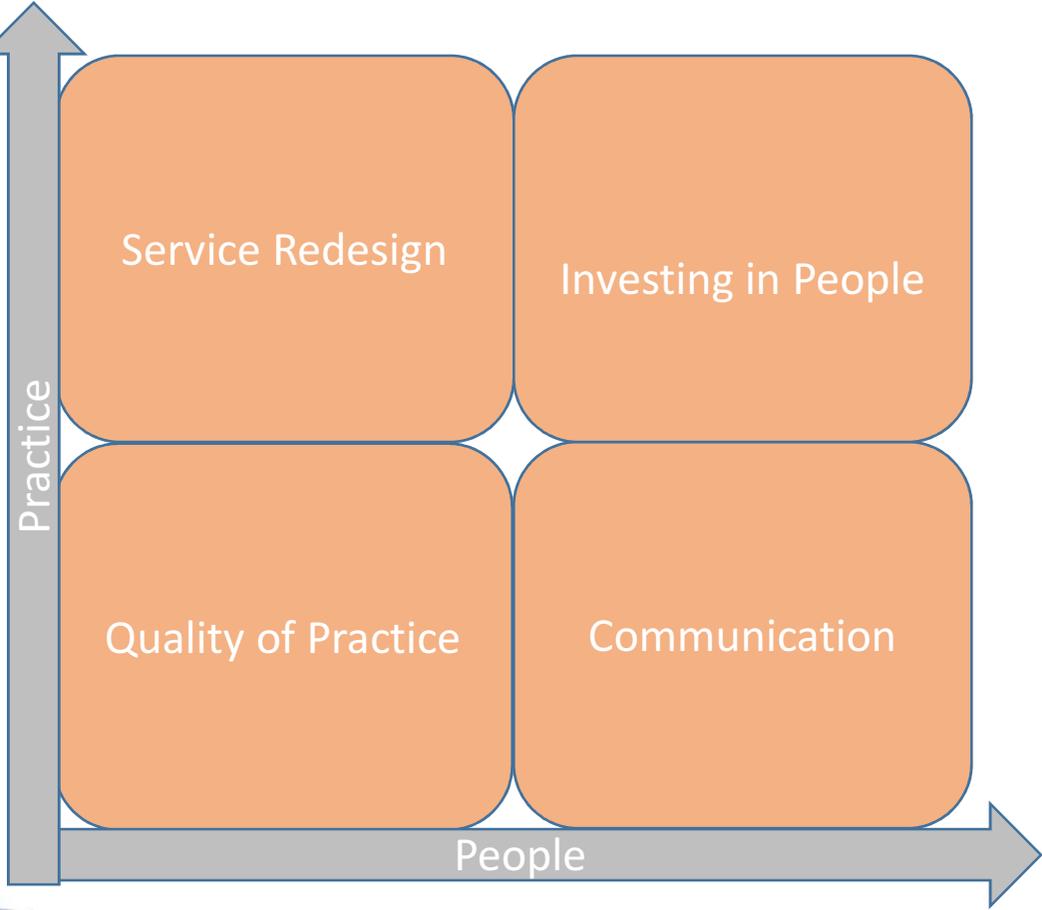


# Next Steps & Areas of Focus for Next 3 Months



# Review of Ambitions Plan

- For each of our ambitions we are focusing our improvement activity around 4 themes - “Four Boxes Approach”
- Chunking the work up to get traction
- Continuing to link improvement to day to day work



The Practice Improvement Team have met with each of the Ambition Leads to identify the immediate priorities that align to these areas.

Our new Relational Practice Partners ( Strengthening Practice ) will wrap around and deliver bespoke support in each of the priority areas.



# Next Steps

- Continue to progress implementation of redesign – right people , right skills , right posts
- Maintain our focus on our audits and moderations so that we continue to better know ourselves , understand our quality of practice and take action
- Development our *multi agency* Quality Assurance Framework – continue to learn and develop as a partnership
- Implement our bespoke “ strengthening practice programme” – designed with practitioners for practitioners!
- Roll out the Supervision Framework – right support to all practitioners
- Strengthen our decision making across the whole child’s journey
- Continue to prototype our revised Early Help Arrangements – right help, right time, right way.

