



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL



Children's Services Improvement Activity and Progress October 2021

Introduction



- Recap on the improvement activity that has taken place over the last 6 months
- Review of where we are up to – progress and areas for further work
- Consider barriers and issues
- Share and update on formal assessment of progress: DfE and Improvement Chair's assessment
- Ofsted through the Monitoring Visit 28th & 29th September 2021
- Lay out next steps including how we will chart progress

Our Focus over the last 6 months

- Reflected on findings from the Focus Visit – and sense checked the findings against Our Ambitions plan & incorporated areas we needed to strengthened
- Continued to have a “back to basics” approach but moving more to think about purpose and quality
- Recognised the on going impact of COVID and Redesign on our workforce
- Forensic focus on Workforce – this has been and continues to be our biggest priority
- “Chunked” up immediate priorities for our managers and practitioners
- Continued to strengthen our QA and performance reporting – line of sight to practice
- Continued to focus on partnerships – strategically and operationally
- Kept all our conversations about children and families – and kept seeing our children regularly

Priorities within Priorities

- We have identified 4 key areas of focus and overlaid these upon the 8 Ambitions
- This has helped managers & work stream leads to focus on the task in hand and to prioritise.
- It provides the 'golden thread' from strategy to practice.
- Ambition leads have reviewed their work streams within this context
- Practitioner Board is now doing the same
- Shared ownership of issues and solutions



Redesign Journey March 2021-Sept 2021



28th Jun - Sept :

- Recruitment and Matching processes commenced and service structure being populated starting with Management roles (HoS Practice Manager)
- Marketing and recruitment company secured for social work vacancies

4th Oct:
Launch and go live of new Children Service's model

5th Oct:
Making it work in practice!!

1st Jul- Sept:
• Case progression clinics held to determine right pathway for children and families

19th Mar 30th Apr:

- Assimilation and analysis of consultation responses .
- 131 121s sessions held HR colleagues, Unions and managers for staff
- 5 Dedicated team meetings held
- **Be-spoke day in the life of sessions held & attended by 211 staff**
- Partner session held - attended **55 Partners**
- Carers session held - attended by **20 Carers**
- **Managing the Psychology of Change & Personal Change** sessions held to support staff

22nd - 24th Jun:

End of Consultation Outcome briefings held with staff. Led by DCS and Director

16th Jun:

- Final Union briefing to share proposed structure

1st May- 15th Jun:

- Finalisation of the revised structure and sign off

30th Apr:
Close of staff consultation

17th-18th Mar:
Launched formal consultation. Whole service and individual service presentations delivered



Redesign



- Redesign has taken longer than we had anticipated Worked with our staff and managers to get it right
- Needed to make brave decisions and hold our nerve and match / appoint people with the right skills and experience
- COVID & different ways of working has also been a challenge - seeing this locally and nationally
- Seeing an increase in agency staffing levels and turnover - not unique to Trafford but our agency usage is higher than average – currently 40%
- Majority of Practice Managers posts will be permanent appointments (56%) but opportunity to bring talent in
- Majority of social workers will be working in the areas of the service they want to - only 7 social workers did not get their first preference
- Recognised that simply changing people and posts won't get us to where we need to be...

Progress - Investing in our People



- Market force supplement for posts where there has been greatest turnover implemented in July but too soon to see impact
- Re-shaped our “Investing in our People” steering group – chaired by Director of Early Help and Social Care
- Commissioned a marketing and recruiting company to support our recruitment campaign
- Continuing with our ‘grow our own’ approaches – Front Line and social worker apprenticeships; 11 new starters in this quarter
- Increasing and improving our student offer – including fast track pathway to join us
- New approach to supporting our newly qualified social workers (NQSW) in their assessed year (ASYE) – Commissioned a new provider to deliver bespoke sessions to NQSWs
- Progressed refresh of supervision framework led by “practitioners and managers for practitioners and managers”
- Started our 3 year Strengthening Practice Programme – first part of which is “Care and Confidence”
- Developed be-spoke management induction programme

.....**Great deal going on in this space but the key is managers that support with confidence and we are not there yet**



Progress: Quality of Practice – Audit Activity



- Practice Improvement and Learning Service is now in place and working across the whole service – driving QA systems and processes as well as “show and tell”
- Compliance 78% managers starting to see the value
- 76% agreement with moderated & audited judgements – better understanding of what good looks like
- 63% of audits are rated as RI or better – slight drop from previous quarter but linked to high expectations and workforce challenges
- Key gap is closing the loop and influencing practice; we will see the same issues if this doesn't happen
- Extending our range of QA activity e.g. live audits; conversational audits and multi- agency audits – means of influencing the partnership
- Becoming more data intelligent and undertaking deep dives to understand the issues e.g. – repeat CP planning
- QAF and expectations built into induction for **all** post redesign
- Means we have a clear understanding of the issues but managers influencing practice key to improving outcomes for children

Progress: Quality of Practice – Practice Lens



- Have continued to see children & see them face to face – 94% of children with CP plan seen 4 weekly
- Have continued to roll out Children Impact Chronologies (CimC) to understand the lived experience of our children and the decisions we make ; Over 100 practitioners trained and starting to use CimC
- Revised Public Law Outline (PLO process) – early days but already seeing improvements in grip, ownership and diverting children from care
- Have a dedicated service plan for Child Protection Chairs and IROs supported by a performance score card – to focus on influencing plans and decisions we make for children
- Continued to strengthen Missing From Home practice and processes e.g. creative approach to how interviews take place and revised electronic reporting and assurance arrangements but have more to do in respect of managing risk
- Introduced ‘Child’s’ Journey’ methodology; a strengths based approach to approach & planning for children
- Strength Based Intervention Led Practice Programme – 3year investment
- Continued to strengthen partnership and governance arrangements e.g. established safeguarding effectiveness sub-board; co-location of FRT and GMP enhancing joint decision making

What we know

- Leadership continue to have a better line of sight to practice but middle and front line managers remains an issue
- Experience of supervision is mixed – In terms of both frequency and quality & especially in teams were we have needed to move managers on
- Workforce stability is impacting on children - 33% of children have had three or more workers makes it difficult to build trusted relationships and influence plans for our children.
- Role of CP chairs and IROs needs further strengthening – overseers of planning for children to be strengthened – need to change the culture.
- Written records do not reflect the lived experience of our children – they are not ‘their story’
- Strengthened PLO processes and starting to see impact
- Assessment and planning still driven by process and compliance and this is limiting the effectiveness of our interventions

.....But when we get it right and have consistency of worker we make a difference

DfE Highlight Report Sept 2021



In the most recent LA Intervention Highlight Report, DfE adviser commented on a strengthened “*‘focused determination’ both within the Council and across the partnership to deliver the improvements needed.*”

Other key points highlighted within the report:

- *“The **redesign** consultation, planning and implementation of Phase1 has gone well and this has been recognised by the Unions.... All open cases are being assessed to ensure they are allocated to the right part of the redesigned structure and this has provided an additional level of scrutiny in terms of quality of practice and ensuring children and young people have their needs met in the right part of the system”*
- *Workforce stability remains a concern, particularly in relation to the recruitment of permanent experienced social workers.*
- *“Continued improvement in compliance and outcomes of **quality assurance** activity”*
- ***Management oversight** & the impact of this on the quality of decision-making & practice needs to be more consistent*
- *“Successful procurement of **Strengthening Practice** improvement partners for a three year period”*
- *“Good use of **external consultants and peer sector led improvement** support to provide constructive challenge and learning for Trafford”*
- *“Despite being in intervention for over two years Trafford will only be receiving their second Monitoring visit at the end of September as a result of the pandemic. They have therefore not had the benchmarking and progress checking from Ofsted around improvement progress that other LAs would have benefited from during this time”*

“Improvement has continued to be delivered through the challenges of the pandemic at a steady and focused pace and the Council now has an accurate self-assessment of where its strengths are, areas that are improving and areas that still require further improvement”

Key Points from MV Feedback

Work with children

- Evidence of children being seen regularly and being seen alone. After a very limited period, social workers quickly resumed seeing children face to face.
- Saw examples of social workers working really hard to build relationships. Social Workers could talk in detail about their cases but some of this detail not always evident on case files.
- Quality of recording often not meaningful.

Assessments & Plans

- Evident that workers do try and get wishes and feelings, but gap in how this is used to understand the life of the child.
- Quality still too variable

Plans

- Written plans are vague with a focus on compliance and process rather than whether things are improving.
- Changes of social worker have caused delay for some children
- Child impact Chronologies not consistently used; when used they are useful.
- Plans Mostly updated when there is a change of circumstance.

Key Points from MV Feedback

Child Protection chairs and effectiveness

- Not always clear evaluation of risks. Chairs do not model child focused approach; Not framed around risk and children. Chairs don't always consider history, second or subsequent CP plans.
CP plans are reviewed but the way they are presented makes them hard to follow. Lot of focus on task and compliance.
- Minutes for reviews delayed, poor and often difficult to follow.

Child subject to Child Protection who are missing

- Return Home Interviews routinely offered, but quality of the intervention is not always visible. Reason why children are missing is still limited.

Impact of Leaders

- Strong corporate and political leadership; Strong governance and commitment to maintain strategic development & improvement has been maintained throughout pandemic.
- Effective set of performance indicators & gives an accurate view.
- Still some significant weakness; instability of workforce, inconsistent quality of practice, too many changes of workers (compounded by weakness in management & CP chairs)
- Good foundation, but over the next 6 months need to accelerate the pace of change

How we are going to deliver on all that is yet to do?



We know that we need to pick up pace, and start to 'land' some of the goals in advance of our next monitoring visit. DMT will meet on 7th October to target set against critical priorities – agreeing what is a priority for the next two and four months.

October – November 21

December - January 22

Next visit – February 2022

Priorities and next steps



Area of focus	Actions	How it will make a difference	By when	How we will know
Leadership and management	<p>Launch and embed supervision framework</p> <p>Dedicated coaching sessions for all managers to enable reflective conversations.</p>	<p>Staff will have good quality reflective supervision that supports practice</p>	<p>November 21 – Launch of Framework Dec 21 - Audit Jan 21 - Survey March – Next audit</p>	<p>Quarterly audits and staff survey will confirm</p>
Leadership and management	<p>Deliver against the Child Protection Conference Chair / Independent Reviewing Officer Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Children and families will benefit from a child focused approach to help understand what we are worried about and their progress with the plan.</p>	<p>Dec 21</p>	<p>Audit will show Child Protection conference minutes will evidence evaluation of risks, consideration of history & challenge where drift & delay is identified.</p>

Priorities and next steps



Area of focus	Actions	How it will make a difference	By when	How we will know
Workforce stability	<p>Develop bespoke agency retention programme</p> <p>Target set against agency rate.</p>	<p>Agency staff feel invested in & valued and, in turn, are committed to Trafford. Children experience fewer changes of workers</p>	<p>October 21</p> <p>October 21</p>	<p>Decrease in % children with 3+ more workers</p> <p>Improved turnover & retention rate</p>
Workforce stability	<p>Continue working with the external recruitment partner to target social work vacancies.</p> <p>Further strengthen the Induction Programme in line with newly designed service areas.</p>	<p>Permanent recruitment of social workers to reduce the over reliance on agency staff which reduces the risk of turnover.</p> <p>New starters to Trafford (or new roles) will feel invested in.</p>	<p>October 21</p> <p>October 21</p>	<p>We will have more permanent workers coming to join us. Agency rate reduces.</p> <p>New starters will be routinely asked by Practice Improvement Service for feedback on their induction experience.</p>

Priorities and next steps



Area of focus	Actions	How it will make a difference	By when	How we will know
Quality of practice	Strengthening Practice to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete the delivery of the Care & Confidence phase of programme. - commence the delivery of the Core Skill programme (assessment, planning & parenting capacity) 	Staff will feel supported and re-connected to core values of the work we do with children & families. Assessments & plans are strength based and avoid drift and delay	Phase 1 due to conclude April 22 Phase 2 due to start April 22	Regular Keeping in Touch meetings with Strengthening Practice take place monthly. Attendance is monitored. Workforce collaboration with SP to continue to co-produce the programme. Audits will evidence improved strength based plans & assessments and how we work with parents.
Quality of practice	Develop and implement child centred recording using sprint methodology Review of systems to support practice	Records will reflect child's lived experience and drive planning in a way that children & families understand.	December 21	Through routine monthly case file audits quality of recording will be reflected.

Ongoing Priorities



There are a number of key things that we know we *have* to keep at the forefront of all of our improvement work:

- We have to maintain a **forensic focus on practice**
- We have put in place the **right support and scaffolding** - Managers supporting staff is key
- We must keep the conversation around “**what difference is this making to children?**”
- The judgement has to be “**Is life getting better for this child?**” and we have to continue to ask

“Would this be good enough for my own children / family?”





Any Questions?