

LA INTERVENTION – 6 WEEKLY ADVISER HIGHLIGHT REPORT

**LOCAL
AUTHORITY**

Gloucestershire County Council

**REPORTING
PERIOD**

July to December 2020

ADVISER

Claire Burgess

DfE CASE LEAD

Kellie Knott

HEADLINE MESSAGES FOR THE MINISTER

(Succinct 2-3 sentences intended to be used in instances where you only have one minute with the Minister, what are the key things he needs to know?)

The outcome letter following the Focused Visit in October 2020 recognised the ‘change in tempo’ in terms of pace of improvement and a ‘guarded optimism’ looking to the future’. There is still much to do around specific areas of practice, but the current senior leadership team have a good grip on this and areas for further development and improvement are clearly articulated in both the Accelerated Improvement Plan and the performance reporting and the quality assurance activity being undertaken. Gloucestershire’s response to COVID has continued to be positive, proactive, and well managed.

OVERVIEW OF IMPROVEMENT BY THE AUTHORITY OVER THIS REPORTING PERIOD AND RISKS TO THEIR IMPROVEMENT

(Progress made by the authority; what’s going well; and adviser’s assessment of significant risks and concerns that might impact on improvement)

Things that are going well:

- Recognition by Ofsted of the increasing effectiveness and impact of improvement work and greater pace in improving outcomes for children and young people. It is positive that the Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) already included focused areas of improvement picked up by Ofsted.
- The Annual Conversation with Ofsted took place on the 9.10.20 and reiterated:
 - Improved pace and progress with improvement and impact of improvement activity.
 - Focus on contextual safeguarding and work and challenge to partners in this area of practice – making progress in developing a strategic and practice response.
 - Continued evidence of the impact of the workforce strategy and work of the Children’s Social Work Academy in improving both the capacity, capability, and stability of the workforce with continuing reduction of numbers of agency staff.
- There is strong coherence in the analysis of where things are going well and where improvement is needed considering the outcome of the Ofsted focused visit and Annual Conversation, Gloucestershire’s own performance and quality assurance reports, the self-evaluation, reports from the Independent Improvement Board Chair and my own observations and analysis. Together this provides assurance that Gloucestershire knows itself well and can increasingly evidence areas of improvement that have been embedded and sustained and improvement that still needs further focus and attention.
- There is an improving overall trajectory of quality of practice that is good or outstanding and a reduction in practice that is inadequate.
- Continued strong corporate and political support with a good line of sight to front line practice through reporting to the corporate leadership team and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Both the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive are members of the independently chaired Improvement Board.
- The Accelerated Improvement Plan continues to focus improvement and assurance activity on the areas of performance that need improvement and there is capacity in the system to lead and drive this.
- The DfE Children’s Social Care grant funding was agreed at the beginning of November and improvement work aligned to this funding is well underway in line with the funding agreement as part of the newly created Transformation Programme.
- As part of the DfE funding a Deputy Director has been recruited to support the Director of Children’s Safeguarding and Care to provide additional capacity and two expert consultants sharing a role focusing on scoping how Systemic Practice can be rolled out as the social work

model for Gloucestershire and the reconfiguration of social care services.

- The Children's Social Work Academy is both proactive and innovative, has a strong governance Board that drives the strategic and operational direction, chaired by the DCS, reporting directly to the Corporate Management Team. It is well resourced and supported.
- Performance and case file auditing is focussing support on underperforming teams and the accountability of managers and practitioners for their work, as well as quality of practice more generally.
- There is an increasingly strong culture of learning in Gloucestershire, both from audits, SCRs and Local Child Safeguarding Reviews which is supported by the Principal Social Worker working with the Social Work Academy.
- Opening of an innovative specialist resource for young people moving from care, Trevone House, for up to 19 young people aged 16+.
- Transformation Plan in place for the children's social care element of the Transformation programme with key performance indicators and measures of success.
- Gloucestershire is evidencing that it is managing the impact of COVID and delivering business as usual, whilst delivering improvement and has continued with a high proportion of face-to-face contact with children and families.

Risks and concerns:

- ICT provider Sopra Steria was hit by a ransomware attack in October which had significant impact on the Council's ability to access its electronic information. This led to delays in reporting and impacted on virtual working for several days. The situation is now resolved but highlighted some issues with the provider and this contract is now being recommissioned.
- Continued management oversight to secure and embed consistent good practice whilst managing the impact of the COVID pandemic.
- The Interim Acting Director for Education has recently left the Council. The DCS is undertaking this role on an interim basis and there are plans to recruit permanently to this post early in the New Year.
- Concerns about the Fostering Service which have resulted in an independent review being carried out commissioned by the local authority. There has been a recent serious incident relating to a child in care and a police investigation is on-going in relation to the foster parents.
- Concern about risk aversion in the partnership and understanding of thresholds of need - which part of the system should be responding to what needs. A significant number of contacts are being received by MASH that either result in NFA or referral to early help. This can result in delay to providing support to families and activity in MASH that is not productive.
- The Senior Leadership Team is stable and is driving improvement with grip and at pace, and any disruption to this could have an impact on improvement activity at this critical point.
- Impact of further lockdown on service delivery. To date Gloucestershire have managed well as reflected in the Ofsted Focused Visit and regular meetings with Ofsted, DfE and the RSCs office. They have not relaxed practice standards.
- To date there has been low levels of sickness in the service, particularly relating to COVID but this is an on-going risk in terms of capacity.
- Some performance areas have plateaued or dipped as evidenced in the October reporting but there were a range of factors that potentially impacted on this including the Focused Visit by Ofsted, the problems experienced by the ICT provider and the implementing the latest version of Liquid Logic. Inevitably the workforce is increasingly affected by the continued impact of running a service in Lockdown and the risks of COVID-19. This will be monitored through the local and strategic performance surgeries. Overall, the trajectory remains positive, but it will be important to be assured that this is a blip and not a downward trend.

DETAILED ASSESSMENT

(Provide more detail on the points raised in the overview section above. Case leads are required to report to the Minister on Social Work Practice including Ofsted's reporting categories. These categories should be used as a broad structure for reporting. The space immediately below each category should be used to specify the area of the improvement plan you are reporting against. Please feel free to note "nothing to report" where necessary)

(Red) - little progress against the improvement plan or significant concerns that the LA will fail to complete the improvement plan and achieve RI when re-inspected, OR high impact of external threats (e.g., financial, vacant leadership posts).

(Amber) - some progress against the improvement plan or some concerns that the LA may fail to complete the improvement plan and achieve RI when re-inspected OR moderate impact of external threats (e.g., financial, planned leadership change) OR very early stages following an inadequate judgement.

(Green) - good progress against the improvement plan indicating that the LA will complete the improvement plan and achieve RI when re-inspected AND low impact of external threats (e.g., financial, leadership stability).

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SERVICES (Please specify key areas from the LAs improvement plan within each category)	PROGRESS R / A / G (Against improvement plan)	SUMMARY (Brief commentary on what they have done to achieve progress rating)
SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE To deliver consistently good services so children are safer sooner: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To reduce the proportion of inadequate practice and increase the proportion of improving practice so that practice is consistently good or better. 2. To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals tool across the five key areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Supervision & Management Oversight b. Visiting & Direct Work c. Assessment of needs, risks and circumstances d. Planning & Reviewing e. Case recording 3. To communicate with practitioners, managers and leaders to engage their 'hearts & minds to deliver practice & 	AMBER	<p>Case file auditing in September and October indicated an on-going recovery and a sustained move away from practice that was inadequate. In October, 30% of audits rated practice as good or outstanding, 62% as requiring improvement and 8% as inadequate (12% is the target set for inadequate practice, and 42% for good practice by February 21). The November QA work indicated an increase of the inadequate work to between 16/18% but at the same time an increase of good work to 34%. It is too early to say whether this increase in inadequate practice from October is significant or not (this was 17% in September) but sustained pace and grip around practice is critical to ensure that the continued improvement is sustained, and that any RI practice moves into the stronger practice arena rather than on the cusp of inadequate. Overall, progress in this area is positive and evidences the impact of improvement work around key practice areas.</p> <p>Practice rated as good continues to be in a consistent group of 16 teams with 10 of these teams sustaining this for over six months. There are 15 teams where practice is less consistent. Having monitored this for a period a Team Improvement Project has been set up which is supporting these teams with targeted improvement activity. Each team has a bespoke improvement plan, and all the team managers are receiving 1:1 coaching, which has been well received. Data is available to drill down to the performance of individual practitioners. Some of these teams are already showing signs that they should come out of this cohort early in the New Year. November saw the lowest number of social workers and teams rag rated red.</p> <p>Case supervision performance was above target for the first time in October (85%) and this is a focused piece of</p>

<p>performance improvements.</p> <p>4. To protect children through timely decisions and risk informed intervention and support that has a positive impact and improves outcomes.</p> <p>5. To achieve permanence for children at the earliest appropriate opportunity.</p>		<p>improvement work led by the interim Deputy Director of Safeguarding and Care. This needs to be maintained and further improved and to ensure that the recording of supervision and reflective discussions is also consistently good.</p> <p>Recording on case files remains an improvement priority for all service areas. A dip sample looking at 19 children's records identified that recording was largely 'colour blind' and failed to take a child's race, ethnicity and culture, language, and religion into account. As a result of this the Principal Social Worker, in partnership with the Social Work Academy, have developed a training programme to promote the use of the 'Social Graces' learning tool as well as adding an additional module to the Essentials 3 programme to increase focus on equality, diversity and inclusion. This is good evidence of how Gloucestershire are using their learning from auditing activity to improve practice.</p> <p>Whilst there have been some areas where performance has dipped or plateaued, that is part of the nature of improvement work, overall service improvement remains on a positive trajectory. It will be important to monitor the next performance report and see what the trend is looking like.</p> <p>Overall Gloucestershire has coped well with the impact of COVID on practice, using only two of the flexibilities made available (Adoption and Fostering) and generally compares well with other local authorities for visits to children, particularly face to face.</p> <p>Work has begun on scoping out what rolling out the systemic model of social work practice would like with the Centre for Systemic Social Work practice.</p> <p>Gloucestershire needs to keep up the pace of improvement and continue the relentless focus of improving practice and outcomes for children in the priority areas identified in the AIP.</p>
--	--	--

OFSTED REPORTING CATEGORIES

<p>CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION</p> <p>The key practice improvement priorities are set out above and are detailed and updated in the Accelerated Improvement Plan.</p>	<p>AMBER</p>	<p>Identification of need and provision of support by partners through the early help offer is an area needing further improvement. There seems to be a risk averseness in the system, particular with health and education partners, that is leading to too many children and families being referred into the MASH when their needs would be best met by universal services in the community and/or an Early Help Offer. Between June and November of the 1447 contacts, 354 referrals were signposted for a children's social care response. 515 contacts were considered to require no further action and a further 578 contacts were signposted for an Early Help response, including 94 that were already open and allocated within the Early Help Service.</p>
---	---------------------	---

This piece of work showed that a significant proportion of contacts from partners do not meet the threshold for children's social care and means that a significant proportion of MASH resource is tied up in screening and triaging contacts unnecessarily, but also brings children and families into a statutory system that they should not be in. 50% of contacts from Health and 51% from Education resulted in an Early Help response, with 36% and 15% respectively resulting in an outcome of NFA.

For cases where neglect was an issue there was little use of the Neglect Tool kit that has been agreed across the partnership, less than 0.5% from health and 33% from education. Of the 179 contacts from known referral sources where neglect featured as a presenting reason in October, only 23 neglect toolkits were completed.

It is important that the Strategic Safeguarding Partnership look at what further training and support is needed around understanding the levels of needs and thresholds in Gloucestershire and what this looks like in practice as well as reinforcing the agreement to use the Neglect Toolkit to assess need and risk.

In terms of the Early Help arena, timeliness of decision-making following contact decreased in October, with 25% of families experiencing delays. Performance was impacted by pace of initial decision making in the MASH, likely to have been impacted by the volume of work entering the MASH as identified above. Timeliness of initial visits to children requiring targeted support remains low (20%) and a third of completion of assessments are overdue. Performance has followed a declining trend 63% in October down from 95% in June. A high proportion of ongoing assessments are currently overdue (90%). Levels of repeat work is high. Work is on-going to better evidence impact, particularly in terms of cases stepped up to or down from statutory services, but it is critical for Gloucestershire to get this part of the system working well for the rest of the system to be able to cope with demand and ensure that children are in the right part of the service to meet their needs.

Rereferrals and repeat CP plans remain high. A focused piece of work was carried out in November. Performance in this area dipped in November (31%), although the rolling 12-month figure has improved slightly (28%). There is significant variability across the localities. The work has identified some key themes to be worked on and identified that a small number of families have been subject to multiple re-referrals in a 12-month period. An action plan is in place and being monitored. A monthly dip sample of re-referrals across the 6 localities continues and this will continue until the rate reduces to the target of 24%.

Timeliness of MASH enquiries completed within 24 hours (33%) has remained similar from August to October and continues to impact on decision timeliness overall. In October, the final outcome for 77% of contacts was decided within 48 hours (this was 90% in October 2019).

Timeliness for red rated contacts declined to 84% in October down from 94% in September. These measures are all monitored under the AIP.

Initial visits on referrals within timescales continued above target at 87% and timeliness of seeing children progressing under S17 was also above target at 88%. However, timeliness of seeing children progressing under S47 decreased to 79% in October from 91%.

The re-referral rate for Gloucestershire in October was 26% and continues to improve monthly although there remains fluctuation across the localities.

83% of single assessments completed in October were within timescale which is in line with peer comparators (82%) but below target of 85%. This has consistently been on or just below target since June 2020. 40% of completed assessments resulted in no further action for the third month, 280 of 707 assessments. A further 14% were referred to Early Help or another agency following assessment (101 children) so in total 54% did not go on to receive a further social work service.

Most open assessments are within timescale but there is a small number (64) in October which were overdue and greater management oversight is needed for these cases to stem drift and delay.

Most Children in Need continue to be seen in a timely way (93%) and performance is above target. 99% of children stepped down from a Child Protection Plan or open as a Child in Need for three months or more had a CiN Plan in place. There is some delay in CiN Plan reviews, and this is an area where further improvement is needed in terms of timeliness.

Timeliness of initial strategy discussions is an area of improvement activity and was below target in October, 79% compared to 85% in June 2020. Most strategy discussion progress to a S47 enquiry (77%). Timeliness of S47 remains high (93%). Attendance by statutory partners in October was good, but there is an issue where some discussions are recorded as strategy discussions without key statutory partners being present. There is a planned workshop to look at this with the police in terms of the statutory requirement for them to attend under Working Together 2018 – if they do not attend then they are not compliant with statutory guidance. There have been instances where meetings have had to be delayed or the meeting has happened following single agency actions by the police.

In October 33% of children progressed to an initial child protection conference. Timeliness for initial child protection conferences remains on target, 80% and 78% of children were made subject of a child protection plan. Timeliness of seeing children subject to a child protection plan remains above target at 91%. 100% of review conferences that took place in October were within timescale and performance has been above target of

95% for nearly eight months. 18% of visits that took place in October were not recorded in a timely way, an increase for the third month.

Repeat protection plans have increased and this has been off target for the majority of the previous 6 months. Levels of repeat work remains high which contributes to the volume of work in the system.

Response to risk following missing episodes and for those children at risk of all forms of exploitation needs further improvement. Return Home Interview completion and timeliness has declined overall but for children in care missing has improved. Children's Services has also signed up to be part of a Missing Pilot with the Childrens Society in association with the National Working Group to test how effective local practice is in respect of missing and return interviews.

As identified by Ofsted the timeliness and quality of pre-proceedings work needs further improvement to secure the safety of children and to achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity. A project has been set up led by the interim Deputy Director for Children's Safeguarding and Care. Work has been completed on establishing a baseline. Monthly pre-proceeding reviews are in place and the pre-proceeding tracker has been reviewed and updated and the Liquid Logic workspace launched. A case progression manager has been recruited which will help with the tracking of cases. Currently there are 72 family groups involved in Pre-Proceedings. 18 of these are running over the 26-week timeline with the longest running set of pre-proceedings at 77 weeks at the end of December and 53 cases running within the 26 week timelines.

The interim Director of Children's Safeguarding and Care has also completed a piece of work looking at 10 of the most vulnerable young people in the community with complex needs which is informing both the discussions on contextual safeguarding but also strategic discussion with health partners, particularly CAMHS. These young people's needs place them at very high risk and a more integrated and timely response to meeting these needs is required. This is leading to a more strategic discussion on how these young people can be supported in a more integrated way, the strategic discussions relating to CAMHS support will be significant.

Contextual safeguarding – Lauren SCR published 14 Dec 20. The GSCB thematic Child Safeguarding Review on three young women who have been sexually exploited has been done. The National Working Group for Exploitation were commissioned by children's services to bring challenge, support, and subject expertise and this resulted in a useful report with recommendations to improve strategic planning and operational practice.

The interim Director of Children's Safeguarding and Care and the specialist consultant, who has been recruited as part of the DfE funding, have recently done a piece of

		<p>work on behalf of the Safeguarding Children Partnership on developing the Child Exploitation workflow and best practice and this will be an ongoing focus of both strategic and operational development.</p>
<p>CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER OR ACHIEVING PERMANENCE</p> <p>See above</p>	<p>AMBER</p>	<p>The nature and scale of the improvement actions to meet the care and permanence needs of children in care and care leavers are significant. As a result, there are challenges in doing this at pace. There are clear plans in place covering Edge of Care support and intervention, entrance to care arrangements, placement stability and permanence outcomes. Phase 1 of the new Edge of Care Service Review has been done following a formal staff consultation with the existing Intensive Recovery and Intervention Service. Most of the staff will join the Diversion, Prevention and Support Team that is being developed to form the new Edge of Care Service. The new service is being co-designed with staff and care experienced young people as part of Phase 2 due to start in January.</p> <p>Placement stability both long and short term remains a challenge with issues around placement choice and sufficiency – placement right the first time is an issue. In October 18% of children in care had had 3 or more placements in the previous 12 months across all periods of care. Short term stability was worse than target (13%) and almost double peer group comparators (9.8%). Long stability remained at 61% and below target (65%) and peer group (70.1%).</p> <p>A permanence project has been set up led by the interim Deputy Director and Phase 1 has been completed. The aim is to identify children who have a permanency plan, provide assurance they are in their permanent placement and ensure that funding is costed for as long as they require the placement. If this is not the case then there will be a review of the care and permanency planning decisions, recruitment of in-house carers, commission permanent external placements if needed, and report on all associated and projected costs. This is a priority project for the service for obvious reasons, both in terms of children and young people's outcomes and financial resources.</p> <p>Initial Health Assessment significantly have significantly improved 47% to 72% but health checks for younger children are declining. Declining dental checks. There is on-going discussion with the CCG about these areas of improvement.</p> <p>There is an improvement plan in place for the Fostering Service and improvements are being reported because of more targeted management and leadership. A comprehensive report was presented to the November Improvement Board highlighting that one of the first improvement targets was to ensure that managers and senior leaders have the management and performance information necessary to understand service effectiveness and drive further improvement. The development of the data dashboard, web reporting and</p>

	<p>integration of forms and tools in Liquid Logic are evidence of progress being made. Improvement in management oversight has highlighted the need for further improvements in placement occupancy and recruitment as part of the efficiency strategy. The target for 2022 to have 80% of all children in care to be placed in a GCC foster placement is a challenging one.</p> <p>In response to several concerns about practice and performance that have recently emerged, including a very serious sexual abuse allegation by a young person and admission by foster carer, an independent review of the fostering service is due to report in January.</p> <p>Ofsted were critical of the quality of PEPs when they did their Focused Visit and the need for the Virtual School to be more aspirational for its pupils. This is being addressed as part of an improvement plan for the Virtual School and the creation of a Management Board. Issues such as attendance, exclusions, and education achievement are part of this.</p> <p>In relation to court proceedings the Family Court Recovery Plan has been implemented locally to address delays in issuing and moving children through care proceedings because of the Covid pandemic and subsequent lockdown periods. Gloucestershire has worked well with the local judiciary and this has been an area of good practice with the setting up of virtual courts and training of social workers in collaboration with the Judge. At the end of December there are 18 family groups that are pending issuing of care proceedings, 96 sets of open Care Proceedings. The timetabling for 75 of these cases will exceed the 26-week timescale and delay in concluding cases is further delayed due to lack of capacity that the Court has for listing cases.</p> <p>There are 37 cases that were issued before the first lockdown awaiting Issues Resolution Hearings or Final Hearings and these have all exceeded the 26 week timescale. Additional legal support is being provided by Warwickshire County Council who are running 19 sets of Care Proceedings on behalf of Gloucestershire. The issue about Court capacity is a national one and Gloucestershire have been proactive and innovative in how they have and continue to deal with this situation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADOPTION PERFORMANCE <p>This are is not part of the Improvement Plan and is monitored as business as usual.</p>	<p>Adoption performance was found to be good at the last Ofsted inspection in 2017.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">R/A/G</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EXPERIENCE AND PROGRESS OF CARE LEAVERS <p>See Above</p>	<p>From October 19 to October 20 Gloucestershire was in touch with 95% of its of care leavers. The proportion of care leavers(16 – 20) seen in September and October increased to 70% up from 46% in June 20. However, performance in this area remains too low.</p> <p>Pathway planning for care leavers has been on a</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AMBER</p>

downward trend since June 2020 (94% down to 85%). The target is 90% and October is the first time it has been below target since May 20. 63 care leavers do not have a Pathway Plan, or their plan is overdue. 7 care leavers did not have a plan in place in October 2020.

91% of care leavers live in suitable accommodation. Half of the care leavers in Gloucestershire are in employment education or training up from 43% in June but below target of 55%, with performance for 16–18-year-olds being 49%. 22 young people progressed to full-time education (51%).

Audits are showing that care leavers are more likely to be in receipt of weaker practice than good practice. After a period of maintaining high levels of quality 60% in August, in October this was 18% and inadequate practice from 0% in August to 27% in October.

An improvement plan is now in place for this part of the service and how care leaver services are delivered will be part of the remodelling work that is happening.

The impact of COVID on employment and training opportunities for care leavers are likely to be significant. A bid to the 'Kick Start' programme has been made which could potentially create 98 posts across the partnership.

The opening of Trevone House will provide significant resource to support young people aged 16+ in care . It will provide semi-independent accommodation for young people in care with the support of specialist services, including day provision for the Intensive Recovery Intervention Service and 2 flats providing health placements for young people needing mental health support. It is anticipated that some of these young people will return from placements out of the Gloucestershire area. Part of the DfE Transformation Grant will be used to train staff and the wider team around the young people in Trauma Informed Model of Care. The first young people have been identified for places.

The work being undertaken as part of the Transformation Programme which is looking at the design of the current service structure and model across children's social care, will be considering where services and support for care leavers fits best.

Work is underway to reinstate the care leavers forum following challenges about a virtual platform that both staff and care leavers can access.

The University of Oxford, as part of its Bright Spots Survey, undertook a survey of care leavers in Gloucestershire ' Your Life Beyond Care'. The overall response rate was 32% of care leavers and the survey focused on what is working well for them, what could be better and asked questions to gain insight into their lived experiences and what would make their experiences better. There was a focus on Pathway Plans and 56% of

		<p>care leavers felt involved in their Pathway Plan all or most of the time. These findings will be incorporated into the 11+ action plan.</p>
<p>LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE</p> <p>The AIP is focused on practice improvement and what needs to be happen to deliver consistently good services so children are safer and sooner. At this late stage in their Ofsted Improvement Journey the leadership, governance and management arrangements are in place. There is, however, on-going refinement and activity to strengthen this.</p>	<p>AMBER TO GREEN</p>	<p>The Accelerated Improvement Plan remains the document that identifies the priority areas for improvement, reports on progress in these areas and is used as the key document for reporting and providing assurance around improvement of practice. This is a strong document that is forensic in detail.</p> <p>Following the Ofsted Focused Visit a review was undertaken of the Strategic Performance Meeting by the Director for Safeguarding and Partnerships to ensure practice, performance, quality, and improvement priorities were aligned for maximum impact. Changes were agreed to the agenda, meeting process and membership to also include ICT and increase participation from corporate performance colleagues.</p> <p>The Improvement Activity Grid has also been reviewed and recalibrated and as a result there is renewed focus on re-referrals, pre-proceedings, edge of care, entrance into care, placement stability and permanence.</p> <p>Child level interventions are monitored through locality performance surgeries, with information available to managers through daily reporting.</p> <p>Heads of service meet at least twice a week with the interim Director for Children’s Safeguarding and Care and there is evidence of an increasingly mature approach to system wide improvement.</p> <p>The Principal Social Worker has recently undertaken the Annual Social Work Health Check Survey and focus groups are planned to follow up key themes and issues.</p> <p>There is strong performance monitoring and quality assurance activity, and Ofsted were confident in Gloucestershire’s judgements from audit activity and commended the framework. This is positive as it confirms that Gloucestershire does know its practice performance well and can have confidence in the auditing of quality of practice. There is an overall continuing reduction in the number of inadequate cases to cases audited RI, good and outstanding.</p> <p>Workforce stability has significantly increased and there is scrutiny of vacancies and recruitment of permanent and agency staff on a regular basis. In December there were 88 agency workers and 22 vacancies.</p> <p>Just under 80% of social workers have a caseload of 18 children or fewer, most workers continue to hold 22 children or fewer (93%). This is manageable in terms of being able to do quality practice but should not go any higher.</p> <p>The Social Work Academy is strong and is at the heart of the workforce development strategy for Gloucestershire. It is well resourced and supported corporately and</p>

politically. It is having impact on the recruitment and retention of staff, is delivering the training around improving social work practice and supporting the significant number of newly qualified social workers that Gloucestershire is employing as part of its workforce strategy. The Academy also supports a significant number of student placements (30) last year who were supported to finish their placements despite Covid-19 and provides encouragement for them to begin their career as social workers in Gloucestershire – 78% of the 2020/21 Assessed and Supported Year of Employment cohort progressed through the student offer. The development of practice supervisors and educators by the academy also provides a pipeline for Advanced Practitioners and Team Manager roles (12 have been promoted to Team Manager roles). The academy has received positive endorsement from Skills for Care.

The Academy functions as the centre for learning and development to support the continuous improvement of social workers through the Post Qualifying Standards woven through the department's practice fundamentals, delivering leadership training and development for managers, the delivery of the Essentials 2 and 3 programmes around core elements of practice. 85% of the social work workforce has completed some or all of the Essentials 2 programme. Gloucestershire is a Phase 2 pilot site for the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) and will support 20-30% of the workforce through the accreditation and assessment process. The Academy also supports the Advanced Practitioners who are a key link between the Academy and the workforce and will be supporting the roll out of the Trauma Informed Model of Care for the team and partners supporting residents at Trevone House.

The DfE Transformation grant has enabled Gloucestershire to appoint three senior interim leaders/consultants to bring additional capacity and expertise to the programme. The interim Assistant Director Improvement started in August and is providing capacity for the interim Director of Children's Safeguarding and Care and doing specific pieces of targeted improvement work including repeat referrals, repeat child protection plans, PLO pre-proceedings planning and permanence planning. The two independent Transformation Consultants have a shared role focusing on developing an implementation plan for the systemic social work model and the development and implementation of a new locality model for children's social care. This work has begun.

The DfE Grant will also fund a provider to deliver coaching across the management and leadership teams including, a Leadership Development Programme with the Senior Leadership Team to support, and 1:1 coaching for Heads of Service, Service Managers and Team Managers, linked to the Leadership Programmes delivered by the Social Work Academy. This is a significant programme of support which should have impact in developing management and leadership

competency.

The Transformation Programme is important as it is looking to the future and continuous improvement that is a wider vision and ambition than the current Improvement Plan. The Project team is in place and the first Board meeting will be held in early January.

As children's social care have stepped up their pace and delivery of improvement it is increasingly important that partners do the same as expectations will be higher in terms of their contribution to improving strategic thinking and operational delivery. It will be the role of the GCSP and Improvement Board to ensure that this happens going forward. The Council cannot deliver sustainable improvements on their own.

WHAT'S COMING UP IN THE NEXT REPORTING PERIOD / ADVISER ACTIVITY

(Key meetings / activity / inspections / publications)

- Complete Vision Values & Behaviour work – this has been considerably delayed but should be completed in January and result in setting out the Leadership Fundamentals (Leadership Pledge).
- Implementation of the Transformation Programme using DfE Grant funding for 20/21 for the social care elements. The first meeting of the Transformation Board is happening in January 2021. This Board will report to the Leader's Oversight Board ensuring political and corporate ownership.
- On-going focus on improvement on key areas in the AIP and preparation for reinspection from April 2021
- Recruitment to Director of Education post

ADDITIONAL INFO

(Use this box if your comments do not fit into a specific 'Key Challenges' category)

- There were 9 referrals of serious incidents to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel during 2020. None of these resulted in a national review and 5 resulted in a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review, 3 relating to contextual safeguarding.
- There has been one Serious Case Review published during this period 'Lauren' – relating to sexual exploitation and contextual safeguarding.
- Gloucestershire took part in the Regional Peer Challenge Event at the beginning of December when DCSs and their SLT share their self-assessments with peers for critical feedback and support. Ofsted liked the self-assessment that Gloucestershire presented at their Annual conversation.
- An independent Fostering Review is underway which had been planned but has been expedited following a Serious Incident following the alleged abuse of a child by foster carers. A criminal investigation is underway. Complex Investigations Procedures were invoked because of the number of children who had been placed in the past.

DATE OF NEXT UPDATE

MARCH 2021