

## Accelerated Improvement Plan October 2021

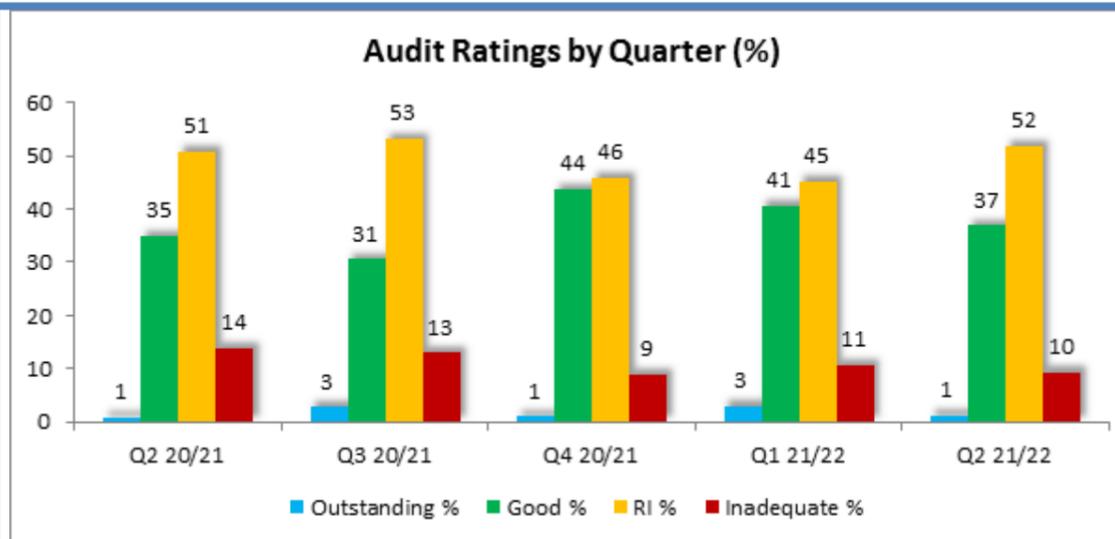
<b>Aim of the plan</b>	<b>To deliver consistently good services so children are safer, sooner</b>	
<b>Priorities</b>	<b>1.</b>	<b>To reduce the proportion of inadequate practice and increase the proportion of improving practice so that practice is consistently good or better.</b>
	<b>2.</b>	<b>To ensure full participation in Essentials and in-house Management and Leadership Programmes to deliver consistency, compliance and quality of practice and performance as quickly as possible.</b>
	<b>3.</b>	<b>To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool, including:</b> a) <b>Supervision and Management Oversight (to be regular, reflective and appropriately recorded in order to drive good practice outcomes)</b> b) <b>Visiting and Direct Work (to be timely, purposeful and champion the voice of the child - including MASH red RAG rated contacts)</b> c) <b>Assessment of needs, risks and circumstances (to reflect the Essentials 2.0 Programme 'Anchor' and 'Risk' principles)</b> d) <b>Planning and Reviewing (to be C-SMART, adaptive and effective)</b> e) <b>Case Recording (to be up to date, clear and comprehensive)</b>
	<b>4.</b>	<b>To communicate with Practitioners, Managers and Leaders and engage their 'hearts and minds' to deliver practice and performance improvements</b>
	<b>5.</b>	<b>To protect children through timely decisions and risk informed intervention and support that has a positive impact and improves outcomes</b>
	<b>6.</b>	<b>To achieve permanence for children at the earliest appropriate opportunity to improve their life chances and overall outcomes</b>

### D A S H B O A R D

Reporting period:	Improvement Board – 27 October 2021			
	Actions Status		Impact Status	
1. To reduce the proportion of inadequate practice and increase the proportion of improving practice so that practice is consistently good or better.	■ On target		■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	
	● Completed		● Completed	
2. To ensure full participation in Essentials and in-house Management & Leadership Programmes to deliver consistency, compliance and quality of practice and performance as quickly as possible.	■ On target		■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	
	● Completed		● Completed	
3.a.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool  Supervision and Management Oversight	■ On target		■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	
	● Completed		● Completed	
3.b.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool  Visiting and Direct Work	■ On target		■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	
	● Completed		● Completed	
3.c.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool  Assessment	■ On target		■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	
	● Completed		● Completed	

3.d.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool  Planning and Reviewing	■ On target	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: green;"></div>	■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: yellow;"></div>
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	
	● Completed		● Completed	
3.e.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool  Case Recording	■ On target	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: green;"></div>	■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: red;"></div>
	● Completed		● Completed	
4. To communicate with Practitioners, Managers and Leaders and engage their 'hearts and minds' to deliver practice and performance improvements	■ On target	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: green;"></div>	■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: red;"></div>
	● Completed		● Completed	
5. To protect children through timely and consistent risk informed intervention and support that has a positive impact and improves outcomes	■ On target	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: green;"></div>	■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: yellow;"></div>
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	
	● Completed		● Completed	
6. To provide care and achieve permanence for children at the earliest appropriate opportunity to improve their life chances and overall outcomes	■ On target	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: green;"></div>	■ On target	
	◆ Compromised		◆ Compromised	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: yellow;"></div>
	▲ At risk		▲ At risk	
	● Completed		● Completed	

<b>Actions &amp; Progress made</b>																				
<p>1. To reduce the proportion of inadequate practice and increase the proportion of improving practice so that practice is consistently good or better.</p>	<p><b>Monthly case file audits</b> - these continue to be undertaken on a monthly basis. The table below set out Quarter 2 performance for 2021/22 and the following table sets out performance over the past year.</p>																			
	<table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto;"> <caption>Audit Ratings Last 3 months (%)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Outstanding %</th> <th>Good %</th> <th>RI %</th> <th>Inadequate %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Jul-21</td> <td>0</td> <td>42</td> <td>50</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aug-21</td> <td>2</td> <td>35</td> <td>55</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sep-21</td> <td>2</td> <td>35</td> <td>50</td> <td>13</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Month	Outstanding %	Good %	RI %	Inadequate %	Jul-21	0	42	50	8	Aug-21	2	35	55	8	Sep-21	2	35	50
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**2. To ensure full participation in Essentials and in-house Management & Leadership Programmes to deliver consistency, compliance and quality of practice and performance as quickly as possible.**

- **The Social Work Academy** has moved to new premises in Quayside. Delivery of Essentials 2.0 and 3.0 programmes were paused during August to allow for the Academy to relocate and re-started in September 2021.
- **The Essentials 2.0 Programme** – Since the start of September 2021, sessions have continued to be offered by the Social Work Academy once per week with the places available for each session oversubscribed from 16 to 24, as agreed at the Academy Board meeting in July 2021.
  - Within Children’s Services, a total of 563 staff are currently required to complete Essentials 2.0 Modules as part of their role. As of 24/09/21, **54%** of the eligible staff group had completed **all 3 modules**.
  - The breakdown of data in relation to module completion is as follows:

No. of Modules Completed	No. of Staff	% of Eligible Staff Group
3	303	54%
2	58	10%
1	39	7%
0	163	29%

- **The Essentials 3.0 Programme** - the Essentials 3.0 thematic programme has been developed and modules are being delivered through a virtual classroom.
- **NAAS/PQS** - GCC continues to be part of the National Assessment & Accreditation System (NAAS) / Post Qualifying Standard (PQS) Trailblazer Programme which commenced in December 2020. This enables children’s social workers to develop skills and knowledge to improve outcomes for children and families. GCC is an identified trailblazer. The NAAS/PQS development and endorsement processes is providing wider benefits in clarifying role profiles and career progression pathways for staff. This has had an initial benefit in qualifying the experience needed for Senior Social Worker and Advanced Practitioner roles. As part of our NAAS pilot there are now 3 staff cohorts of trailblazers with a total of 34 participants:
  - Of the 34 NAAS participants, 27 (80%) are undertaking the endorsement programme as part of our new senior social work progression route, which supports the development and retention of social workers.
  - The evaluation process for the Management and Leadership programme (see below) will support the endorsement of Team Managers.
- **Team Manager Management and Leadership Programme** – The first cohort of our Leadership and Management Programme, which was developed in line with the Practice Supervisor Post Qualifying Standards (PQS), has now been completed. On completion of the programme, there were **40 team managers** within the cohort. The Academy delivered the following modules: Introduction; Quality Improvement (QI); Quality Control (QC); Quality Assurance (QA); Power, Authority and Influence; Shaping and Improving the System; Performance and Resource Management; and Emotionally Intelligent Supervision. There has also been 2 days focusing on systemic

leadership from the Institute of Family Therapy (IFT).

On completion of the programme, **11 team managers (28%) had attended all 10 modules**. During the course of the 12 month programme we have seen 11 managers leave GCC or move to a new role, and 5 managers have commenced their systemic practice training. The breakdown of data in relation to module completion for the Management & Leadership Programme is as follows:

No. of Managers	No. of Management & Leadership Modules Completed
11	10
8	9
5	8
1	7
8	6
2	5
2	4
3	3

Evaluation and feedback from team managers attending the programme has been positive and the Academy has recently undertaken a review of the modules in readiness for delivering the programme to a second cohort of team managers in October 2021.

- **Transformation Programme :**

- **Remodelling** – The re-modelling transformation project has continued to be progressed with the support of Jack Cordery, transformation consultant/subject expert who has now completed his assignment with GCC. SLT has reviewed the proposed staffing structures for the Area-Based teams, Edge of Care and 16+ Adolescent Service at its meeting in August 2021. Some further consideration is being given to proposals for Early Help and spans of control for Children’s Social Care. In view of the imminent Ofsted inspection, SLT has decided to pause the remodelling. SLT will continue to review the implications of the proposed structures over the next couple of months and incorporate the feedback from the Ofsted inspection to inform the formal consultation with affected staff.
- **Systemic Practice** – The systemic practice transformation project has progressed with support from Clare Chamberlain, transformation consultant and subject expert. Formal and accredited training commenced with the Centre for Systemic Social Work (CfSSW) in June 2021 with cohorts of social work practitioners and practice supervisors/practice leaders. The 1<sup>st</sup> cohort includes 19 x Practitioners and 10 x Practice Supervisors and the 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort which started in September 2021, includes 35 staff - 20 practitioners, 10 supervisors and 5 practice leaders (Heads of Service and Service Managers). The Systemic Practice Launch took place on 14 September and was attended by 70+ practitioners/manager. A Systemic Practice Awareness Workshop is planned for SLT on 22 October 2021 and will be co-facilitated by the CfSSW and Clare Chamberlain. Thereafter, the workshop will be cascaded to all Children’s Heads of Service in Children’s Social Care and across Commissioning and Education. Plans are underway to explore options for integrating systemic clinical leads within practice to support practitioners and managers under-going CfSSW training and to support implement systemic learning in practice. Preliminary discussions have ruled out CAMHS sessional/secondment opportunities due to capacity issues however negotiations with the CfSSW is likely to identify capacity and expertise provided by professionals with joint-qualifications in systemic practice and social work and this is being actively considered at the moment. Implementation of the Systemic Practice programme is likely to be a 3 to 5-year programme and marks a significant milestone for the service.
- **Fostering Transformation Board** – Following the independent review of the in-house Fostering Service undertaken by Karen Simmons (LGA Associate) and previously presented to the Improvement Board, the service has now established a new Fostering Transformation Board chaired by the interim Director for Safeguarding and Care. The inaugural Fostering Transformation Board was held on 19 October 2021. The Fostering Transformation Board is a multi-agency/disciplinary and is tasked with the strategic oversight and direction of the Operational Project Group and the delivery of the 7 workstreams including:
  - **Service Development** - This includes the development of the Strategic Plan and the underpinning Vision and Operating Model for the Fostering Service; a workforce development plan for the Fostering Service which includes its interface with the wider Directorate; an options appraisal and implementation of a therapeutic model to strengthen the consistency and quality of care; an options appraisal and development of bespoke fostering models for children with complex needs
  - **Support to Children** - This incorporates an alignment of existing resources to support placements and the development of enhanced support services including contribution of partner agencies for children with complex needs; closer integration of the Fostering Service with placing social workers regarding use of care teams, placement stability meetings and permanence planning
  - **Support to Foster Carers** - This includes development of 24/7 support arrangements to foster carers; delivery of bespoke training, incorporating the agreed therapeutic model, to support carers to respond to the needs of complex children; the development of enhanced assessment, supervision and support arrangements and bespoke arrangements for connected carers
  - **Recruitment and Retention** - Benchmark activity regarding support and remuneration; development of refreshed recruitment and retention and marketing strategies with potential additional investment. Creative use of resources including Fostering Champions
  - **Placements** - This includes the development of an options appraisal for a streamlined approach to manage resources and processes to identify placements
  - **Care Planning** - This includes an options appraisal regarding social work capacity to support permanence planning and the development of an early permanence pathway for long-term fostering and connected carers
  - **Quality Assurance and Performance** - As a regulated Service, this includes the development of measures to strengthen audit and performance

	<p>management arrangements to drive improvements in the quality of care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SLT ‘Leadership Fundamentals’ and Leadership Programme</b> –The leadership fundamentals initiative has been completed by SLT with support from Claire Burgess, DfE Advisor, and Jack Cordery, Remodelling Transformation consultant and subject expert. This is now starting to be used to shape, inform and underpin a range of improvement, development and transformation activities. The Staff College has been commissioned to co-produce the SLT Leadership Programme and support the delivery of the Transformation Programme. A preliminary planning session was held between the Staff College and SLT in June 2021 and the programme is scheduled to commence shortly now that the new Director for Education, Kirsten Harrison, is in role. This initiative is funded by the DfE grant.</li> <li>• <b>Staff College Coaching Programme</b> - The DfE grant is also being used to fund a comprehensive coaching programme for all Team Managers, Service Managers and Heads of Service. Following completion of the introductory orientation sessions, all managers were matched with a Staff College Associate Coach following a preliminary ‘chemistry conversation’ and individual coaching sessions are now underway and progressing well. Each manager will receive up to 6 coaching sessions over a six-month period. The programme has a broad specification and capacity to address a wide range of professional and organisational priorities. The coaching offer provides a maximum of 6 hours coaching over 4 or 6 coaching sessions depending on whether sessions are an hour or one and a half hours. All coaching is being delivered remotely and virtually and there was a staggered start beginning with Heads of Service, then Service Managers and Team Managers. The programme will be evaluated and surveys are now starting to be distributed to managers and coaches for completion and evaluation as their scheduled coaching sessions are completed. To date anecdotal feedback is very positive with managers reporting via 1:1 supervision that they are appreciative of the coaching offer and the dedicated time, space and independent coaching expertise delivered by the Staff College associate coaches. It is anticipated that the Staff College will be able to analyse the coaching survey feedback and present an evaluation report by February 2022 when all managers will have completed their coaching sessions.</li> <li>• <b>Service Manager Leadership and Management Programme</b> - The DfE grant has funded the design and delivery of a Management and Leadership Development Programme for Service Managers which is scheduled to commence at the conclusion of the Team Manager Management and Leadership Programme.</li> <li>• <b>Trauma Informed Model of Care (TIMoC)</b> - The DfE grant provided match funding to deliver the TIMOC training for Trevone House staff as part of a phase 1 pilot. The official Trevone House virtual launch took place on 11 March 2021 and all Trevone House staff are now TIMOC trained. A number of operational social work staff have also started their training which is targeted to prioritise social workers, team managers, service managers and Heads of Service who have young people already living in Trevone House or with agreed plans for young people to transition into Trevone House. Planning is now underway for the TIMOC phase 2 development focusing on the in-house Fostering Service. As part of the extended training offer, Dr Draper is also providing consultation to staff, and identified externally commissioned placement providers, to help promote a TIMoC with a number of young people presenting with very complex needs and this has assisted in bringing a more therapeutic and nuanced understanding to the care young people in crisis have received. This has helped to stabilise a number of placements and reduce repeat placement disruption.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.a.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool</b></p> <p><b>Supervision and Management Oversight</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supervision</b> - There are three supervisory components which are tracked and reported including casework supervision (focusing on allocated children, young people and families), professional supervision (focusing on individual staff and professional issues) and reflective/clinical supervision (focusing on a group learning approach to promote professional curiosity and a deeper appreciation of the relevant issues to problem solve and explore appropriate remedial action): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Casework supervision</b> – the casework supervision target has been stretched to 95% for 2021/22, up from 80% in 2020/21. The Interim Director of Safeguarding maintains on-going scrutiny of supervision performance with monthly compliance reporting performance dropped below target and has been affected by high/latent demand, increasing caseloads, workforce ‘churn’ as well as sickness and leave arrangements.</li> <li>○ <b>Professional supervision</b> performance for August 2021 decreased to 86% (from 92% in July) but increased back to 92% in September 2021.</li> <li>○ <b>Reflective / clinical group supervision</b> over the last 12 months this has continued but has been impacted by CV-19. Advanced Practitioners have aimed to facilitate these sessions on a remote and virtual basis although teams are beginning to report that they are increasingly starting to undertake this on a face to face basis. Moving forward the plan is to use the reflective/clinical group supervision sessions to focus on the development of systemic practice and this will start from September 2021 onwards alongside the implementation of the CfSSW training.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>The Team Improvement Project (TIP)</b> – The TIP has continued to be led by the lead improvement and development consultant and focuses on identified teams most likely to produce the weakest / inadequate practice based on analysis of performance and QA evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A previous review of the Tracker and membership of the TIP already identified teams that had made sufficient progress to exit the TIP. These teams have sustained practice and performance improvement and continue to progress. As there had been ‘proof of concept’ for the TIP following the impact and outcome it</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>had delivered in the pilot phase of implementation, the scope was expanded to some other teams, not necessarily inadequate but certainly requiring improvement. Membership of the TIP is agreed based on the on-going performance and QA evidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The most recent TIP review identified 4 priority teams/service areas with enduring concerns about practice and performance in the Forest of Dean and Tewkesbury Localities plus the 11-25 Service Cheltenham and Gloucester North Teams. The Safeguarding Director and Lead Improvement Consultant have met with the relevant Heads of Service for these areas to discuss and agree recovery plans. A further review is being undertaken to monitor the impact of the 4 recovery plans mentioned above.</li> <li>○ The next TIP review will consider a refresh of TIP membership based on current performance and QA evidence.</li> <li>○ The Director of Children’s Safeguarding and Care continues to review the monthly Social Worker and Team Performance Tracker which targets priority key performance indicators by scrutinising individual social worker and team level data. Based on the most recent Tracker in August 2021 (which now include again dental checks), there is evidence of an increase of social workers RAG rated Amber or Red for 3 or more months (13 in September compared to 7 in July). The numbers of Teams rated Amber or Red for 3 or more months has increased since March 2021 to 30 teams out of 44. Some of this will inevitably have been due to the ICT issues experienced over the past few months but with the ICT recovery programme starting to progress from July, it is hoped that this will have a positive impact. In addition, the inclusion of KPI data for dental checks for eligible Children in Care, which has been adversely affected by the CV19 pandemic does report a backlog. The improving trend seen since March slowed in August and has reduced slightly in September, with 76.5% of children in care having an up to date dental assessment in September.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>The Practice Fundamentals Tool</b> was developed and launched in May 2020 to control the quality of practice and promote individual and collective professional accountability for achieving and maintaining consistently good standards of practice. A dip sampling tool and approach was developed by staff and launched in August 2020 to test the implementation and impact of this approach. The Practice Fundamentals dip sampling has continued to run alongside the monthly case file auditing process for over a year now and evidence indicates that the tool is well liked and evident in example of best practice. A decision has now been taken to de-centralise the auditing and moderation of the Practice Fundamentals so that individual Heads of Service and their respective management groups can decide how to maintain and develop the use of the tool at a local level.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.b.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool</b></p> <p><b>Visiting and Direct Work</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Visits to children</b> - Timeliness of initial visits saw a decline in performance for September 2021 to 65%. Performance of visiting for children progressing under Section 47 also saw a marked increase to 87.5% compared to August (54%). The visiting standard require face to face visits as part of the CV19 business continuity planning moving from response to recovery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ The overall 12-month position for children seen within timescale for initial visits following contact was 64.8% in September 2021 (s47 enquiries was 87.5% and s17 was 63.4%) which is below the target of 85%</li> <li>➢ The percentage of children subject to a Child Protection Plan seen within timescale was 91% in September 2021 which is an increase since July</li> <li>➢ The percentage of Children in Need seen within timescale was 90% in September, which is within tolerance of target (93%),</li> <li>➢ The percentage of Children in Care receiving statutory visits within timescale was 93.8% in September, which is within tolerance of target (95%)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>The Principal Social Worker &amp; Participation Champions</b> - an updated and refreshed direct work tool kit has been developed and launched. The PSW has identified and coordinates a network of Participation Champions across all teams to act as a single point of contact to promote and support direct work with children and young people.</li> <li>● <b>The child’s voice and diversity</b> - A quality assurance exercise focusing on dip sampling children’s electronic records alongside additional qualitative discussions with practitioners was undertaken in April / May 2021 to test the evidence base for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ The impact of the ‘Social Graces’ training to improve practice about difference and diversity</li> <li>➢ Best practice in respect of life story work to help children achieve a secure understanding about their past, present and future</li> <li>➢ The impact of the ‘Language that Cares’ campaign regarding the language that is used to speak with and about care experienced children and young people</li> </ul> <p>The report concludes that whilst there is clear evidence of professional interest, awareness and motivation to improve practice in the relevant areas there continues to be inconsistent evidence of sustained attention to the three activities outlined above in the assessments, plans and recording. A number of targeted remedial actions for each area have been agreed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Direct PSW contact with APs to explore the application of Social Graces at team level</li> <li>➢ Further development of the Practice Fundamentals Tool to incorporate more explicit references to culture and identity as part of assessments</li> <li>➢ Maintain and extend the Language that Cares’ focus in monthly QA auditing and reporting</li> <li>➢ Undertaken roadshows promoting Social Graces, Life Story Work and Language that Cares to further emphasise the importance of these approaches in all aspects of practice with children, young people and their families</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>ICT issues</b> – ICT difficulties and the disruption that has previously been reported and discussed with Improvement Board members has largely been addressed in accordance with the proposed corporate ICT improvement and development plan. Clear improvements have been felt since July 2021 with far were incidents of concern and disruption being reported. This has had a positive impact on staff morale as well as practice and performance.</li> </ul>

**3.c.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool**

**Assessment**

- **Partnership Contacts and Referrals** – The Ofsted Focus Visit letter published on 20 November 2021 highlighted the comparatively high rate of contacts not meeting the agreed levels of intervention for a statutory social work service. Inspectors queried whether this was because the partnership is risk averse and/or not understanding or complying with locally agreed thresholds.
    - In June 2021 a high proportion of contacts continued to result in ‘No Further Action’:
      - 1,240 of 3,114 (39%) of all contacts received by Children’s Social Care were closed with ‘No Further Action’ which is up from 33% on the same time in 2020.
      - Just over half of all contacts (52%) resulting in ‘No Further Action’ received information, advice or guidance.
      - Of the 199 contacts relating to professional concerns about Neglect only 3 contacts (2%) included a completed neglect toolkit checklist
    - Following previous reporting to the Improvement Board about the continuing high number of contacts from Police, Health and Schools/Education to Children’s Social Care Services that do not meet the threshold for statutory social work intervention, a multi-agency audit was completed under the auspices of the GSCP. The Partnership has agreed a number of recommendations to address the issues and these need to be progressed at pace:
      - A review of the Partnership agreement allowing Partner agencies to use adapted MARF’s to notify MASH of a safeguarding incident.
      - Review of Partnership agreement for Partner agencies to use adapted risk assessments
      - Review of the audit sample to understand the percentage of notifications concluded NFA including the reasons for why they concluded with NFA.
      - Further exploration into the reasons for delay and a better understanding of the complexities of the Health system.
      - Obtain advise on the services within the Health system that will have varying knowledge of the child and family to ascertain which services have the ability to include quality information compared to services that will have limited /restricted information.
      - Understand the usability of GSCP Toolkits/screening tools e.g. Neglect, Exploitation, Pre-Birth
      - Further review of Health audit sample to extrapolate further information and context with consideration of establishing a Health Triage / interim measure to support and scrutinise Health notification prior to contact and referral
      - Review of automated emailing system for missing children/young adults to ensure engagement with Health
      - Undertaken a deeper dive to ascertain whether notifications submitted were reasonable due to the presented risk.
      - Police collaboration with Partner agencies to adapt the VIST to include pre-birth protocol questions.
    - In line with recent changes to the governance of the MASH Board, the new C-SPA and MASH Sub Group of the GSCP will now take forward the above recommendations. The Acting Head of Service for MASH, EDT, Missing and Exploitation, Claire Connolly, is the new Sub-Group chair person.
  - **C-SPA and MASH Processes** – The Children’s Single Point of Contact (C-SPA) continues to show high levels of demand activity. This high demand includes:
    - a proportion of contacts still not reaching the statutory threshold
    - evidence of latent demand leading to a 30% increase when compared to pre-CV19; and,
    - increasing complexity (spike in Red RAG rated MASH enquiries)

The combination of these factors has had an impact on the timeliness of initial decision-making, declining from the mid-90%’s to the low 80%’s. The timeliness of end-to-end decision had decreased in August (72%) but improved in September to 78%. At the same time there has been a significant increase in the number of contacts RAG rated as Red rising to 210 compared to a monthly average of 70 between September 2020 to August 2021. Timeliness of decision making for these children remained similar to August at 71%.
  - **Single Assessments** - The majority of social work single assessments completed in September 2021 were within timescale (83.2%) and within tolerance of target (87%).
  - **Legal Planning** - Following the previous legal planning improvement work undertaken by the seconded Ofsted HMI, which started during the first CV19 lockdown in the summer of 2020 and ended at the end of August 2020, the Legal Planning Task and Finish Group has progressed all agreed actions. This has culminated in publication of new practice guidance, changes to operating protocols and a re-design of the Liquid Logic legal workspace, including a new Legal Planning Meeting recording template. The Liquid Logic functionality to develop a PLO pre-proceedings and court tracker has also been progressed. Most recently a decision has been taken to train Legal Services to be Liquid Logic users so that legal colleagues with conduct of specific pre and court care proceedings can enter their legal advice directly into the child’s electronic record which will be more efficient and effective. The refreshed practice guidance has been launched alongside a series of workshops facilitated by the lead improvement advisor with all teams and services. This activity was timely and coincided with the launch of the PLO National Working Group final report and recommendations. This activity relates to the Ofsted Focus Visit feedback in respect of the ‘use and tracking of pre-proceedings to bring about change effectively and to prevent drift and delay’.
- During 2021, there has been a total of 114 Legal Planning Meetings and of these:
- 37.33% resulted in a decision to initiate care proceedings
  - 56.49% resulted in a decision to initiate pre-proceedings
  - 14.12% resulted in no further action

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 6.50% resulted in decisions for alternative legal action e.g. secure accommodation / deprivation of liberty etc.</li> <li>○ 1.10% resulted in a discharge or revocation of an existing court order</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Re-referrals</b> - Re-referrals decreased in September 2021 (21.4%) which means performance was better than target (22.5%) and peer comparators (22.5% in March 2020). This continues to be a priority performance issue with monthly dip sampling of all re-referrals continuing across all of the six Localities. This activity routinely reports to identify themes and issues and inform on-going remedial actions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.d.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool</b></p> <p><b>Planning and Reviewing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>C-SMART Planning</b> – child centred planning remains a priority across the whole service for children in need of support, protection, care and independence. Overall, the quality of plans is improving although not all are consistently good or better yet.</li> <li>● <b>CIN Planning and Review</b> - The previous changes to the CIN Planning and Review Protocol are being implemented and include increased oversight and intervention from the Team Managers which is designed to increase the level of management oversight. Team Managers are now expected to chair the 1<sup>st</sup> CIN review 4 weeks after the conclusion of the Single Assessment, the next CIN review is due three months after that and then at six-monthly intervals thereafter. 78.7% of Children in Need had a timely review or were not yet due a review in September 2021.</li> <li>● <b>Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs)</b> – timeliness of ICPCs had previously been a significant long-standing performance concern. As a result of targeted whole system improvement activity, performance has improved significantly and been above target (80%) for five consecutive months until July. Performance has however declined in August and September 2021 with only 58.1% of ICPCs being timely. Repeat child protection planning continues to fluctuate with under one-third of children becoming subject to a plan in September for a second or subsequent time compared with one-fifth in August (17%). Performance was off target (25%).</li> <li>● <b>Child in Care Reviews</b> – the vast majority (99.2%) of statutory Child in Care Reviews remained timely and within tolerance of the very demanding target of 100%.</li> <li>● <b>Joint Police – Children’s Social Care Workshop</b> – following months of delay due to CV19 the joint workshop eventually went ahead face to face at the Sabrina Centre. The Director (Safeguarding and Care) and the</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.e.To improve the quality and performance of social work practice in line with the Practice Fundamentals Tool</b></p> <p><b>Case Recording</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>ICT</b> - The fragility of the ICT since October 2020 has previously compromised the recording of practice and performance which had a detrimental impact on staff morale. ICT difficulties dating back to the Sopra Steria security breach in 2020 and although the Sopra Steria contract has now ended there is no ‘quick fix’. ICT is considered to pose the highest risk to children’s social care which has impacted on business as usual with concerns that this could compromise the service’s ability to safeguard children and/or compromise the Ofsted ILACS. The reliance that Children’s Social Care has on ICT for recording practice and performance, particularly in Liquid Logic, cannot be underestimated. Early changes and improvements are starting to take effect.</li> <li>● <b>Liquid Logic</b> – Over the past year the Liquid Logic functionality has been developed and improved to support recording in a number of different areas, including the following, although the ICT fragility has unfortunately hampered the anticipated impact of these developments at this stage of the journey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Recording child protection Strategy Discussion decisions and rationale</li> <li>➢ Recording the progress and outcome of child protection enquiries and decision making</li> <li>➢ Recording Step-Up and Step-Down arrangements</li> <li>➢ Recording a new exploitation episode with an updated Screening Tool</li> <li>➢ Recording a revised and refreshed legal workspace</li> <li>➢ Recording placement disruptions</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Screening Review Team</b> - Whilst most children’s social care Liquid Logic records can usually be accessed and then navigated fairly easily, the ICT fragility previously reported hampered efforts to achieve and maintain timely records. Record keeping has been an area the service needed to address and this has been commented upon by Ofsted in the previous inspection and monitoring visits. Ofsted inspectors have reported that staff generally know children and young people very well, are well placed to articulate clear and consistent assessment outcomes and planning decisions and are great champions, but sometimes the recording does not match these standards. Whilst staff made sterling efforts to overcome the ICT difficulties and manage the impact on recording at the time of the ICT disruption this is worrying scenario, especially so close to the much-anticipated Ofsted inspection. To mitigate associated risks the CEx and corporate leadership team generously allocated £500k which has been used to employ a bespoke team of experienced QA screeners to review as many Liquid Logic records as possible ahead of the Ofsted inspection. The Screening Team assembled ready to start screening w/c 26.07.2021 and to date have completed Screeners have been assigned to individual Heads of Service who have been directing their focus and overseeing remedial actions as required. A bespoke screening tool, created by the interim Director for Safeguarding and Care and the lead improvement and development advisor, has recorded evidence and RAG rated best practice and serious shortcomings. Two improvement and development advisors have supported the coordination of the screening team.</li> </ul>

- Screening Review Team - RAG Rating Descriptor:
  - RED** = There are serious concerns regarding the content, quality and recording of practice, which includes omissions, gaps and delays leading to concerns about the safety or wellbeing of the child and requires urgent remedial action.
  - AMBER** = There are some concerns regarding aspects of the content, quality and recording of practice which does not raise concerns about the imminent safety or wellbeing of the child and can be addressed by progressing the identified actions.
  - GREEN** = No obvious concerns regarding the content, quality or recording of practice. The record is generally fit for purpose and does not need any specific action to be taken.
- The latest summary report dated 15 October indicates that the Screening Review Team has screened approximately 2,500 open records. Using the RAG rating criteria set out above the findings are as follows:

Locality/Service Area	Red	Amber	Green
Gloucester Locality	12%	77%	11%
Forest of Dean Locality	28%	59%	13%
Cotswolds & Stroud Localities	9%	30%	61%
Cheltenham Locality	40%	59%	1%
Tewkesbury Locality	15%	27%	59%
Under 11s Service	4%	87%	9%
Over 11s (Cheltenham) Service	13%	87%	0%
Over 11s (Gloucester/Stroud)	12%	41%	47%
DCYPS	14%	84%	0%
<b>Total %</b>	<b>16.33%</b>	<b>61.22%</b>	<b>22.33%</b>

As a matter of urgency, all Heads of Service and their respective Management Teams are tasked with addressing the remedial actions identified by the Screening Review Team findings and recommendations. Particular attention has already been given to all the Red RAG rated findings, including management oversight from relevant Service Managers and Heads of Service as well as undertaking visits to confirm the safety and wellbeing of children. It has been confirmed that no children with a Red RAG rated record has been found to be at risk of imminent harm.

The remaining Screening Review Team capacity will now target Localities where there is most concern, most notably Cheltenham and the Forest of Dean Localities. It is anticipated that the Screening Review Team activity will conclude on/around 18 November 2021. One of the Screeners will be retained to provide additional capacity and support to the Cheltenham Locality for up to a 3 month period.

- Team Improvement Plan (TIP)** – the TIP is due for a further review and it is highly likely that all available resources will be targeted to assist teams address the identified remedial action highlighted by the Screening Review Team, particularly in Cheltenham and the Forest of Dean.

**4.To communicate with Practitioners, Managers and Leaders and engage their ‘hearts and minds’ to deliver practice and performance improvements**

- Workforce** - During the past eighteen months during the CV19 pandemic and lockdowns, the Children’s Social Care workforce has remained committed and hardworking but is now under significant pressure due to the increases in demand, including latent demand, caseloads and complexity in the system. At the same time, the service has social workers and managers who are feeling very tired and experiencing rising levels of sickness alongside significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining social workers. The biggest risk to the improvement journey and the Ofsted inspection outcome is the current workforce pressures. Although the recruitment and retention of social workers is ordinarily very challenging, the market is very competitive, and potentially more aggressive than before, and as a result it has become increasingly difficult to attract candidates, including both agency and permanent, to fill vacancies and to retain existing staff and stop them leaving. A worrying feature that has started to be seen is permanent staff leaving GCC for agency roles elsewhere. In the last quarter, 55% of social work leavers left GCC within 3 months which is very high ‘churn’ in the system. This has an adverse impact on the service continuity for children, young people and families and impairs the standard of practice and performance. Of the 39 leavers during the last quarter, 21 were from the Safeguarding Teams which is where the recruitment and retention difficulties are most acute. A number of social workers are choosing to relocate nearer to family and where they grew up elsewhere in the country, some newly qualified social workers in their assessed and supported year in employment have chosen to leave GCC before their accredited year has been completed and some have decided not to remain in social work. The pandemic has caused staff to re-evaluate their life plans and whilst some social workers were willing to remain in GCC during the pandemic there has definitely been more movement over the past 6 months. The number of social work vacancies in August 2021 remains the same in October 2021 and despite all the many and varied efforts to recruit the service is running very fast just to stay still due to the high level of leavers. The Director for Safeguarding and Care reviews business cases to recruit and transfer permanent and agency staff on a fortnightly basis with the HR Recruitment Team and Children’s Social Care Business Manager. The service is currently holding

- vacancies which it is struggling to fill quickly enough which is putting increased pressure on team/service colleagues. The evidence shows that whilst staff seek to transfer out of Safeguarding Teams to other parts of the service, they invariably never transfer back and staff don't seek to transfer into Safeguarding Teams. The senior leadership team continues to work at pace to take action to stabilise the workforce but the reality of trying to recruit to a service that continues to be rated as inadequate nearly 5 years after the 2017 inspection is incredibly challenging. The actions that have been/are being taken to stabilise the social worker workforce include:
- Harmonisation of agency pay rates – to remain competitive within the top quartile of local authorities in the South West region. This action helped to attract more and better-quality agency CVs resulting in an uptake in interviews and new agency appointments. The agency rate is 22%
  - Commissioning of the Innovate Managed Team – to add capacity to address the increasing demand in the U11s Permanence Team to complete a high volume of Child Permanence Plans associated with a high level of court care proceedings, as well as providing additional capacity to the 11-25 Service.
  - Development of a Medium-Term Financial Strategy - to recalibrate the workforce establishment and honour the pledge to keep caseloads at 18 children or less. In September, 68% of social workers had a caseload of 18 children or fewer and 97.2% had 25 children or fewer. Caseloads have increased to manage the increased demand in the system.
  - Consideration of a pay differential for social workers in Safeguarding Teams – this proposal is currently being scoped to acknowledge that these are consistently the hardest roles to fill. Whilst a pay differential may make Safeguarding roles more attractive to new applicants it remains vitally important to create the optimum conditions within which social workers and their managers can deliver best practice. This includes manageable caseloads, regular and reflective supervision, responsive managers, visible leadership, learning opportunities to grow and career opportunities to develop.
- **Staff wellbeing** – There is a premium on promoting the Council's duty of care towards staff to counter the risks associated with the additional pressures in the system at the moment. It is also important to be aware of the inherent risk of 'professional dangerousness' whereby professionals involved in child protection work can behave in a way which either colludes with or increases the dangerous dynamics of the abusing family (Morrison 1990). The return to offices, whilst continuing to be managed and subject to CV-19 risk assessments and restrictions, provided a much-needed boost to staff morale initially but more office time in offices is now being sought. This has become even more important during September and October 2021 as Cohort 10 of 40 newly qualified social workers in their first assessed and support year in employment begin their employment with the Council. Staff numbers in offices continue to be restricted with staff continuing to operate a hybrid working pattern moving between home, office and community. As local CV19 infection rates continue to persist, these arrangements continue to adhere to social distancing, the wearing of face masks, hand hygiene etc. There is a focus on providing social workers with face to face supervision and team meetings where meeting room size and capacity will allow. The service has worked with Occupational Health colleagues to promote the offer of support available to staff and managers to continue addressing the health and wellbeing of the workforce. This support includes the corporate Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is now open to agency social workers as well as permanent staff, plus specific support to children's service staff such as a 'Frontline Fatigue Workshop' and a Manager's 'Wellbeing Conversation Toolkit.' Frontline Fatigue Workshops began to be delivered in October 2021 and early feedback indicates that some staff are feeling very vulnerable but appreciate the support to develop or re-learn helpful strategies to build resilience.
  - **CV19 Business Continuity Planning** - arrangements continue with Head of Service catch up meetings each Monday morning, an extended Bronze Group and Leadership Team meeting each Wednesday morning, with Services Managers attending on a monthly basis, as well as a Head of Service peer to peer meeting every Friday morning.
  - **Staff Absence Tracker** - The staff tracker shows that overall sickness rates for children's social care staff continue to be lower than before the pandemic but has increased since August. Staff testing positive for CV-19 has been low overall comparatively speaking throughout the pandemic and there are currently 3 staff off sick with a CV-19 diagnosis and one member of staff with long COVID (as of 13 October 2021). All front-line social workers and GCC foster carers have been vaccinated.
  - **Staffing** - The workforce strategy continues to be managed with the following initiatives being concluded for the 2020/21-year end:
    - All Cohort 9 NQSW/ASYEs have established positions within the structure
    - All Cohort 10 NQSW/ASYEs will have taken up their posts in September and October 2021
    - Overseas social workers moving into established positions within the staffing establishment
    - The conversion of agency staff onto permanent contracts remains very slow
    - The Social Work Apprenticeship Scheme
    - Refresh of the children's social care recruitment microsite is partially complete and continues to be further developed
  - **Ofsted**– The much-anticipated and very overdue notification for the Ofsted inspection remains outstanding. In February 2022, it will be 5 years since the previous inspection in February 2017 and it is a year since Ofsted undertook the Focus Visit. The Ofsted Annual Conversation took place on 20 September 2021. The conversation covered the key issues outlined in the Focus Visit letter date 20 November 2020.
  - **DfE Review** – The recent DfE Review engaged staff in three focus groups where social workers, team managers and head of service met with DfE Advisors. DfE Advisors also consulted with key partners. Verbal feedback from the DfE Advisors which will be put in writing, reported a very positive, open and transparent response from all staff with consistent messages being reported about key themes and issues from staff and partners. The DfE reported highlights included the following:
    - Clear evidence of significant progress, which has been accelerated over the last 12 – 18 months.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Despite identified ICT challenges, staff were reported to be mature and solution focused and the commitment from corporate and political leaders is noted</li> <li>○ There has been a positive cultural shift which is evidenced by what staff say about Heads of Service support and the creative and innovative practice solutions, including Virtual Courts, Trevone House, for example</li> <li>○ There is a confident 'grip' on performance and quality assurance reporting with a thorough and consistent 'line of sight' about what's happening in the service</li> <li>○ Learning and development via the Social Work Academy is as good, if not better than, other local authorities</li> <li>○ Compare to the 2017 Ofsted inspection there have been 'huge gains'</li> <li>○ The reduction in the previous over-reliance on agency staff</li> </ul> <p>In conclusion, the DfE Advisors felt that practice and performance was much further on from a year ago and that the Ofsted inspection expected in September/October 2021 should result in a strong judgement of 'requires improvement', possibly with some 'good' features. Some staff feedback about communication and very senior leadership visibility will be addressed moving forward.</p>
<p><b>5.To protect children through timely and consistent risk informed intervention and support that has a positive impact and improves outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Ofsted Focus Visit</b> - Following the Ofsted Focus Visit in October 2020, the feedback and learning was used to refresh the improvement and development activity. A number of these issues affect practice with children in need of support and protection in respect of the use and tracking of <b>PLO Pre-Proceedings</b>.</li> <li>● <b>PLO Pre-Proceedings and Court Recovery Plan care proceedings</b> - Children's Social Care has responsibility for managing the PLO pre-proceedings and care proceedings tracker and has dedicated staff to achieve and maintain the tracker. The revised Liquid Logic legal workspace required further attention to improve functionality for electronic reporting and this will help to achieve and maintain managerial 'grip and pace'. The improvement and development lead chairs a monthly review meeting with the Case Professional Officers, relevant Heads of Service and Legal Services before reporting to the Director of Safeguarding and Care. A comprehensive report is presented to the Leadership Team.</li> <li>● <b>Public Law Outline (PLO) Pre-proceedings</b> - activity, especially children subject to pre-proceedings for longer than 26 weeks, was highlighted in the Ofsted Focus Visit. A targeted action plan, which was shared with the lead Ofsted inspector at the time of the Focus Visit, has reported progress on a monthly basis. The action plan is designed to improve 'grip and pace' so that children experience effective change and drift or delay is avoided. Where evidence of the following is apparent however, matters are put before the court to provide the child/ren with legal protection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There is engagement or non-engagement from parents but the risks persist</li> <li>➤ The impact of the identified concerns on the child has worsened</li> <li>➤ The child's safety cannot be managed with the child remaining in the parent's care</li> </ul> <p>As of September 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There were 57 sets of pre-proceedings (nb: a set of pre-proceedings = a family group not the number of children) and of these;</li> <li>➤ 13 sets of pre-proceedings that were concluded</li> <li>➤ 6 new sets of pre-proceedings were started</li> <li>➤ 6 pre-proceedings progressed with decisions to issue court care proceedings</li> </ul> <p>Pre-proceedings are divided across all six Localities with the Forest of Dean having the lowest number of pre-proceedings (4) where none were over 26 weeks and Gloucester Locality having the most (23) with 8 over 26 weeks. The most common reason for delay in pre-proceedings, which has been affected by the CV19 pandemic/lockdowns, is the identification, availability and reporting of independent specialist assessors for parenting and psychological assessments.</p> </li> <li>● <b>NPLWG</b> - In March 2021, the National Public Law Working Group (NPLWG) published its final report including 47 core recommendations and 15 longer term recommendations and the best practice guidance recommends that the pre-proceedings timeframe is reduced from 26 weeks to 16 weeks. In accordance with the NPLWG to recalibrate practice adjustments have been/are being made to develop and further improve pre-proceedings practice</li> <li>● <b>The Court Recovery Plan</b> – in addition to the PLO pre-proceedings activity, there continues to be an on-going focus to progress the court recovery plan in partnership with Cafcass and the Judiciary to ensure children receive timely legal protection when required. The impact of the pandemic has severely impacted judicial capacity but the development of GCC's 8 x Virtual Court Rooms in Gloucester and Cheltenham has been an innovative solution to a relieve a difficult situation. Current proceedings and pre-proceedings represent an extremely busy and demanding area of practice. The latest court recovery plan report indicates that in September 2021 there were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 125 set of care proceedings (plus 57 family groups subject to pre-proceedings) and of these;</li> <li>○ 32 sets of proceedings were allocated to Warwickshire Legal Services the remainder were allocated to GCC Legal Services</li> <li>○ 6 sets of proceedings were managed though the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)</li> <li>○ 13 sets of new proceedings were issued in September 2021</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 16 sets of court proceedings were concluded in September 2021</li> <li>○ Of the 125 sets of care proceeding, approximately two thirds are timetabled for an Issues Resolution or Final Hearing over the next few months: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 38 were awaiting an Interim Hearing (Case Management Hearing, Further Case Management Hearing or Finding of Fact Hearing)</li> <li>○ 68 were timetabled to an Issues Resolutions Hearing</li> <li>○ 19 were timetabled to Final Hearing</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Virtual Courts</b> – The use of the 8 x Virtual Courts in Cheltenham and Gloucester continues. The previous concerns expressed by the judiciary about GCC’s fragile ICT has been managed with the use of iPad / tablets with no outstanding issues.</li> <li>● <b>GCC Legal Services</b> – Legal Services have faced considerable pressures and demand arising from volume and complexity of court care proceedings. Legal Services have managed to employ new staff and have also secured additional capacity from Warwickshire Legal Services. There is a corporate response to ensure GCC Legal Services continues to be able to meet demand.</li> <li>● <b>Child Protection Conferences</b> - In September the timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences declined significantly to 58.1% and is well below target (80%)</li> <li>● <b>Repeat Child Protection Planning</b> – Repeat child protection planning continues to fluctuate with under one-third of children becoming subject to a plan in September having had a second or subsequent plan compared with one-fifth in August (17%). Performance was worse than target (25%) in September 2021.</li> <li>● <b>Duration of Child Protection Plans</b> – 3.1% of children were subject to a plan for more than two years in September. This is marginally higher than our Peer Group comparators (2.8% March 20) and our target (2%). Half of these children are also subject to pre proceedings or court care proceedings.</li> <li>● <b>Joint safeguarding developments</b> – There are currently several initiatives and activities to improve joint working across the children’s safeguarding partnership, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Child Protection Strategy Discussions/Meetings</b> – these are now convened by the relevant Locality, as opposed to the MASH, to ensure continuity of management oversight throughout the s47 child protection enquiry</li> <li>○ <b>Refreshed Child Protection Strategy Discussion/Meeting agenda</b> – this has been refreshed and agreed between GSCP strategic executive leads for Children’s Social Care, Police and Health.</li> <li>○ <b>Risk Outside of the Home/Exploitation</b> – joint planning, improvement and development activity is on-going with key partners to progress the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Launch and implement the revised Exploitation Screening Tool which is now embedded in everyday practice</li> <li>➢ Streamline and coordinate shared resources in the Joint Police / Social Care Exploitation Team to target children who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of child exploitation (sexual and criminal), including ‘county lines’, missing, trafficking and modern-day slavery.</li> <li>➢ Complete the new draft partnership strategy to protect young people outside of the home which is due in November / December 2021</li> <li>➢ Develop intelligence led practice to take a more pro-active about mapping vulnerable young people at risk of harm with other young people and adults suspected of causing harm to intervene early, protect and disrupt. A recent intelligence led review has been undertaken about a local organised crime group (OCG) (family) which concluded that there was no evidence to substantiate any organised exploitation of young people by the OCG in Gloucestershire.</li> <li>➢ A Safer Gloucestershire funding bid is being made to seek funding for a partnership intelligence specialist and a partnership specialist lawyer. The intelligence post will be a dedicated resource to map vulnerable young people and adults suspected of causing harm and the specialist lawyer will seek to identify every local power and court order to disrupt adults suspected of causing harm to young people.</li> <li>➢ The Director for Safeguarding and Care is working with the Reviewing Service to explore how the child protection conference system and the high-risk panel meeting process can evolve to adequately address the safeguarding challenges to safeguard young people at risk of harm outside of the home.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>6.To provide care and achieve permanence for children at the earliest appropriate opportunity to improve their life chances and overall outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Ofsted Focus Visit</b> - the key practice and performance priorities coming out of the Ofsted Focus Visit in 2020 in respect of children in care included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Edge of Care</b> - Services for children and families at the Edge of Care</li> <li>○ <b>Placement Sufficiency</b> - Number and choice of suitable placements to meet children’s needs and reduce disruption</li> <li>○ <b>Personal Education Plans</b> - to improve the quality to be more ambitious, specific and have measurable targets</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Innovate Managed Team</b> – In addition to the Screening Review Team already referred to above, additional corporate funding has also been used to commission a Managed Team with Innovate. The Managed Team model comprises of a Team Manager and 5 Social Workers with the capacity to support 100 children over a 3-month period. The agreed focus for the Managed Team is permanence planning in the U11s Service which is necessary to address outstanding Child Permanence Reports (CPRs) as a result of the increasing care proceedings as well as intensive support to children in care and care leavers in the O11s Service which is necessary due to the pressures associated with staff ‘churn’, especially in the Cheltenham and Gloucester North Teams. The initiation meeting took place on 16 August 2021 and the mid-point review meeting took place on 1 October 2021. To date the Innovate Managed Team has been beset with difficulties and the experience has not been straight forward. Innovate staffing has been severely affected by CV19, bereavement and personal tragedy. There have been numerous changes of social worker and the Team Manager has changed. This has affected the continuity of service and not provided the level of support first anticipated. There has however been a firm commitment</li> </ul>

- form the Innovate Chief Executive, Emma Blakemore, who has indicated that Innovate will honour the terms of the original contract and has provided additional staffing and an undertaking to work over the contractual period to 'get the job done'. There is a weekly risks and issues meeting which continues to review progress.
- **Edge of Care** - The emergence of the new Edge of Care Service is integral to the children's social care transformation remodelling and continues to be progressed. As part of the planned staff engagement and formal consultation process the intention is to adopt the Intensive Family Preservation Service (IFPS) approach which is an evidence-based approach to help families continue to look after their children and avoid the need for them to come into local authority care. The continuing focus of the Edge of Care Service is diversion from care, support in care and reunification home from care. Some specialist learning and development about the IFPS model is being sourced and it is anticipated that a bespoke programme will be initiated with relevant managers in the first instance so joint collaboration can take place with managers co-facilitating the training with the rest of the service. A review of impact evidence is currently underway to evaluate the first six months of the new Edge of Care Service, including the contribution to the Admission to Care Panel.
  - **Increase in children in care numbers** – the number of children in care is increasing and having previously plateaued around 750 recent admissions have accelerated to a peak of 836. At the time of writing this AIP refresh the number of children in care was 830 (as at 21.10.2021) and the number of children in care in September remained high. This number is expected to rise again based on analysis of the PLO pre-proceedings tracker and evidence from the Admission to Care Panel (ATCP) although it is anticipated that this will plateau as the service addresses the additional demand in the system caused by the latent demand. There have been more than 800 children in care month on month since May 2021.
  - **Placement Sufficiency** – The Board has previously received a detailed report from the Assistant Director for Children and Families Integrated Commissioning, Wendy Williams, in January 2021. Since this time Trevone House has been formally launched and is now CQC registered. Trevone House has recently received a 'Highly Commended' at the 2021 MJ Awards ceremony in Central London. The next phase of the capital programme is being presented to Cabinet in December 2021 and this sets out an ambitious programme of activity to develop additional placement provision over the next 3 – 5 years. This addresses the Ofsted Focus Visit feedback about 'The number and choice of suitable placements for children to meet their needs and reduce the risk of placement disruption.'
  - **In-house Fostering** - the March 2021 Improvement Board heard from Karen Simmons, an independent consultant from the LGA, about the findings and recommendations from a comprehensive review of the in-house Fostering Service. Karen Simmons has now been retained to provide on-going support and challenge to deliver on the review recommendations and there is now a Fostering Transformation Board chaired by the Director of Safeguarding and Care. There are seven operational workstreams designed to targeted the key areas.
  - **Placement stability (long and short term)** - In respect of short-term placement stability, 16.2% of children in care had 3 or more placements over the last 12 months across all periods of care, this is improving but remains below target (13%). Long-term stability has improved to 66% which above target (65%) but just below statistical neighbours (68%). There have been, and continue to be, a number of improvement and development activities to promote and address placement stability including:
  - **Permanence Project Phase 1** - The first phase of the Permanence Project was completed by the beginning of June 2021 with 500 children in care considered in a series of 12 Permanence Panels. The phase 1 Permanence Project concluded with key actions being embedded into business as usual practice to ensure all children and young people in care with a permanence plan have permanent carers identified so that children and young people can be formally matched to provide secure emotional, placement and legal permanence.
  - **Permanence Project Part 2** – Following the recommendations from phase 1, some targeted Permanence Panels were recommended for September/October 2021. To date a targeted approach has been taken to review the position in respect of children in care with a plan of permanence and need to be long term matched with a foster carer. The Under 11s Service position has already been reviewed in a Permanence Panel convened on 14 October 2021 and the quality of care planning for this cohort of children was good overall. The Permanence Tracker is currently reporting as follows:
    - 39 children are now booked into a number of additional Fostering Panels convened for a long-term match scheduled between November 2021 and February 2022
    - 33 children are now living with their long-term foster carers and, subject to confirming various care planning issues/queries, will be matched at Fostering Panel from March 2022
    - 8 children have a plan for long-term fostering but are not yet living in their permanent home and targeted family-finding is underway

There are two additional panels being convened per month between November 2021 and February 2022, making a total of 6 fostering panels a month, with a plan have two more during March and April 2022 to accommodate the 33 children who should be ready to be long term matched by then.
  - **Permanence Tracking** – work has been undertaken to review and enhance the previous Permanence Tracker to ensure the process is aligned to the care planning processes already in place and scrutinises all children awaiting permanence. The Permanence Tracker has been used to inform and support the Permanence Project Panels.

- **Placement Disruption** – targeted improvement and development work has been progressed and is now concluded to address the way in which the service supports children in placements at risk of disruption. New and extended practice guidance, support and Liquid Logic reporting tools are now in place to establish a more effective, pro-active and targeted practice approach.
- **Admission to Care Panel (ATCP)** – The ATCP continues to take place on a weekly basis every Wednesday afternoon and considers all requests for children and young people to enter care. This includes all planned admissions, including consideration of PLO pre-proceedings and court applications, as well as unplanned/emergency admissions, including retrospective approval following Emergency Duty Team intervention, Police Powers of Protection and Youth Court hearings. There has been a significant demand increase, with 830 children in care as at 21.10.2021. The Director for Children’s Safeguarding and Care and the lead for improvement and development oversee all requests for care and consult directly with relevant Heads of Service for every unplanned/emergency request for care. The ATCP comprises of key managers/officers from Edge of Care, Family Group Conferencing, Fostering, Commissioning, the Reviewing Service etc in order to provide challenge and support, additional scrutiny and opportunities to work better together at such a critical point in the decision-making process. Both the Virtual School and Child in Care Health Team are routinely provided with early notice of decisions via the ATCP decision log. Wherever appropriate alternatives to care are explored but the recent rise in child in care numbers reflects an increasing level of risk and complexity in the system at the moment and it is anticipated that some of this is due to the predicted latent demand related to the CV19 pandemic and the impact this has had on family resilience.
- **Admission to Care Panel 3 monthly Review** - The weekly Admission to Care Panel was launched in February 2021 to provide better oversight and management of the planning and decision-making process for children and young people to enter the care of the Local Authority. One of the underlying drivers for the Panel is to address Ofsted’s comments about what inspectors called the ‘second front door’. A 3-month review has been undertaken and the report concluded that:
  - Between 3 February and 15 May 2021, 94 families / 132 children were presented to the ATCP
  - Just over a third of ATCP requests related to the ratification of children who had already entered care. Most of these were a result of ‘trigger’ incidents such as injury to a child or Police intervention but there were also consistent numbers of requests relating to young people excluded from staying in their family home, including homeless 16 – 17 old presentations.
  - Of the 94 ATCP requests, 11 did not result in a care admission with a recommendation of either an agreed package of diversionary support or family resolution via a Family Group conference / Edge of Care intervention
  - The early indications from the establishment of the ATCP are broadly positive.
  - More children are now entering the care system with evidence of improved planning and decision making with improved opportunities for Fostering and Commissioning Services to search and match placements more reflectively with children and young people’s needs. In channelling care admissions in this way our edge of care response is better targeted and timelier to maximise the opportunity to support families to remain together.
  - A further review of the ATCP is now underway.
- **Section 20** - Of all children in care 21.1% were accommodated under a Section 20 arrangement in September 2021. This continues to follow an improving trend against a high number of children in care and is better than target (25%).
- **Care Leaver’s Pathway Planning Quarterly Review** - Performance for care leavers with an up-to-date Pathway Plan was at 87.5% in September, this is within tolerance of target (90%) and has improved (up to 12.3% since April 2021).
- **Care Leaver’s Accommodation** - A high proportion of care leavers continue to live in suitable accommodation (90.8%). This improved in September and is within tolerance of target for the first time since April. Weekly tracking and leadership reporting continue for care leavers who are or may become at risk of homelessness. Identified young people continue to be reviewed on a weekly basis during the CV-19 pandemic to ensure continuity of support and intervention as necessary and appropriate.
- **Care Leavers not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)** – Just over half of our Care Leavers are in employment, education or training (53.2%); Performance is marginally above our peer group (49.8%, March 2020) but remains a long way from our very stretched target (75%). Improvement Board members will recall that GCC Ambassadors requested a more ambitious stretch target to convey the aspiration and commitment that they wanted to see locally. The pandemic has had an adverse impact on young people and EET and this remains a key priority moving forward. The Ambassadors provided the July 2021 Improvement Board with a thematic presentation focusing on employment and there is a high level of activity to encourage and support young people to take up the support programmes that are in place to help them gain employment, including:
  - **AIM** – these are supported internships as part of an established education employability programme for young people with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP).
  - **Step Forwards** – this is a GCC corporately funded programme which specifically targets care-experienced young people to provide them with the support they need to move into paid work.
  - **Works for Me** – this is funded through the GCC Economic Recovery Plan and targets young people who are NEET and who are from areas of the highest deprivation.
  - **Kickstart** – this is a DWP national programme that provides paid work placements for young people to help them build their employability skills ready to move into full time paid work.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>GEM Project</b> - a project for those who are furthest from the labour market.</li> </ul> <p>Step Forwards has a Steering Group which oversees the whole system approach for and with young people. The Steering Group Vice chair role is filled by an Ambassador and there has recently been an appointment of a young person as a Job Broker who is employed in and supported by the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Hub Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Directorate. The Steering Group is tasked with establishing a performance dashboard to report on activity, impact and outcome measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Personal Education Plans (PEPs)</b> – The Virtual School has taken targeted action to address the Ofsted Focus Visit feedback about PEPs needing to be ‘more ambitious, specific and measurable.’ To date extensive training and improvement activity, including external reviewing, has taken place to address the Ofsted feedback which confirms that improvements have been made to the process and focus of the PEP with Schools. Further analysis and evaluation are awaited via an LGA independent review being commissioned by the new Director for Education to determine the impact and outcome of the improvement activity in respect of children in care’s progress and attainment. It is anticipated that the Virtual School will be able to report to the Improvement Board about the outcome of the LGA PEP review in due course.</li> </ul>
<b>Post script:</b>	<p>In light of recent discussions about the review and refresh of the statutory notice arrangements and the future focus of the Improvement Board, there has been a proposal for a thematic approach to key practice and performance issues that would benefit from a broader and deeper review of the relevant issues to address the obstacles and challenges. Some suggestions for a thematic focus on the Improvement Board Forward Plan are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Contacts and Referrals:</b> Focus on revisiting the progress of the multi-agency partnership audit recommendations and the progress that has been made.</li> <li>● <b>Child Protection Strategy Discussions/Meeting:</b> Focus on recent joint workshops between children’s social care and police about decision making and joint working.</li> <li>● <b>Missing:</b> Focus on the system and practice solutions to address delays in reporting missing and establish a more strategic overview of ‘push-pull’ factors.</li> <li>● <b>Children of Concern:</b> Focus on revisiting the previous COC reporting with a focus on exploitation and the connectivity with missing (see above).</li> <li>● <b>Care Leavers:</b> Focus on key performance indicators and practice issues (e.g. Pathway planning, visiting/keeping in touch, accommodation/risk of homelessness, NEET, Health Passports etc).</li> </ul>