

**Lancashire County Council
Children's Services
Self Assessment
May 2018**

1. Foreword

In May 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) issued Lancashire County Council with an improvement notice to address all areas for improvement identified in the Ofsted Inspection Report published in November 2015. The inspection judged three areas to be inadequate: children who need help and protection; experiences and progress of care leavers; and leadership, management and governance. Seventeen recommendations were made in total.

The subsequent two and a half year improvement journey has seen Lancashire Children's Services committed to improve outcomes for our children, young people and families. This has included significant investment of over £10m to strength capacity across Children's Services; a determined focus on getting the basics right; and improving our leadership, management and governance arrangements to enable good social work practice to flourish.

During this time, we have worked closely with Ofsted to ensure direction and pace. We have had six separate Ofsted monitoring visits between May 2016 and February 2018 and have benefitted from the support of a DfE Advisor. A strong, dynamic and effective Improvement Board has driven change and scrutinised progress, alongside a robust Improvement Plan and shorter term twelve week plans. A Children's Services Scrutiny Committee has ensured effective political scrutiny and internal accountability and governance arrangements have been developed to oversee the delivery of the significant change programmes. In addition, partnership action has been taken to respond to the main findings and twelve significant concerns identified following the OFSTED/CQC inspection of SEND services in November 2017.

The feedback offered to the local authority via these mechanisms, as well as feedback from a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review in October 2017, affirms our view that we are making progress, addressing key challenges and that services to children, young people and families in Lancashire have improved.

Our commitment and determination to improve services can be seen and measured within this self-assessment, which offers an overview under each inspection judgement of areas where we are increasingly effective and areas for development and improvement.

We are confident in our improvement so far and that this will continue, supported by strong leadership and increasingly effective partnerships. We are ambitious for our children, young people and families and for our Children's Services. Although the overall judgement of this self-assessment is that we 'require improvement', our clear goal is to be judged as good. We will work tirelessly to continue to improve and achieve our vision:

Children, young people and families in need of help are safe, healthy and supported to achieve.

We will deliver this in partnership through an understanding of the lived experience of a child or young person by:

- *Delivering the right service, at the right time, by the right people through effective wellbeing and **preventative** strategies.*
- ***Purposeful*** and effective social work and care intervention, engaging children, young people and families by building on their strengths.
- Focussing on **permanence**, by delivering lasting and sustainable outcomes for children, young people and their families.

2. Context

Lancashire County Council is the fourth largest council in the UK, covering an area of 2,903 sq km. and serving a population of 1,198,800, 20.6% of which are aged under 18. With 12 district councils, 6 clinical commissioning groups, 4 hospital trusts and 631 schools within our boundaries, plus two neighbouring unitary authorities, partnership working is crucial.

Lancashire is a county of contrasts; there are high levels of deprivation and relative affluence both between and within districts. There are four districts in the 10% most deprived authorities in England alongside districts in the top 30% least deprived. Approximately 15% of children aged under 16 live in low income families.

There is increasing demand for Children's Services. As of 31 March 2018, the number of children and young people in need was 9,166 (an increase of 9% since 31 March 2017), set against a 12% reduction in the number of children and young people subject to a child protection plan (1,243). In line with other regional local authorities, the number of children looked after (CLA) has continued to rise, with 1,968 CLA at 31 March 2018 (a rate of 79.7 per 10,000 children) compared to 1,864 CLA (a rate of 75.9) at 31 March 2017. However, despite a fifth of our CLA (400) living outside of the local authority area, the number of CLA living in Lancashire exceeds 2,500, due to more than double the number of CLA (975) placed here from other local authorities.

As of 31st March 2018, 28 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement (an increase from 22 at 31 March 2017), 22 children were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and 1,210 children were electively home educated. Twenty-eight serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted in the last two years (between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2018) and 7 serious case reviews have been completed. 12 serious case reviews are currently on-going.

3. Improvements to date

The overview below focuses on the improvements made to date in order to meet the seventeen recommendations set out in the Ofsted Inspection Report published in November 2015.

Strengthened senior leadership, including additional early support from a Director of Children's Services from a neighbouring, good local authority, has driven our improvement journey over the last two and a half years. The Children's Services Senior Management Team is permanent, secure and experienced, led by the Director of Children's Services, with additional capacity from Improvement Partners, leading on permanence, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Board (MASH) arrangements and more recently SEND. An enhanced corporate leadership structure has been in place since January 2018, which includes both an experienced Chief Executive and an Executive Director of Education and Children's Services.

The restructuring of Children's Social Care from a countywide to locality model has enabled increased management capacity and stronger, more visible leadership and oversight, with staff reporting that they feel well supported by managers. Feedback from the LGA Peer Review demonstrates that staff feel management is accessible and set clearer direction and expectations.

The extent to which we know and understand ourselves has significantly improved since the last inspection, through higher quality, more accurate and timely performance information and an improved performance management culture across Children's Services. A clear performance management framework and a robust audit framework are in place. Feedback from the LGA Peer Review supports our view that data is significantly improved, audit is purposeful and both are being used to impact on and improve practice.

Elected Members have increased knowledge of the quality of service to ensure a timely understanding of performance progress and issues, through the introduction of the line of sight framework, which includes performance metrics, audit findings, direct observation of practice, feedback, deep dive and external challenge and reviews. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools receives a weekly briefing and attends the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) meetings. A quarterly safeguarding meeting brings together the Chair of the LSCB, Chief Executive and relevant Cabinet Members, ensuring that there is a strong oversight of organisational and partnership issues which may impact on safeguarding. Work to support Elected Members will continue to be developed.

An increasingly stable workforce and the change from generic to specialist children's social care teams is enabling better skilled and knowledgeable practitioners who, in the vast majority of cases, are completing statutory requirements in a timely way. The monitoring visit by Ofsted, in July 2017, found that most social workers know the children on their caseloads well and have taken time to understand their wishes and feelings. Whilst average caseloads have reduced from the levels they were at the last inspection, more needs to be done to bring them in line with targets set.

The introduction of the Risk Sensible Operating Model is ensuring that help received is proportionate to risk and its use can be seen across services. The Continuum of Need thresholds have been reviewed and updated to bring them in line with the Risk Sensible Operating Model. However, further work is required to evolve the model in support of more strength based practice and for the approach to be embedded within partner services.

The LGA Peer Review, in line with our own self-assessment, identified that we have committed and enthusiastic staff at all levels. A strong driver throughout our improvement journey has been to develop and implement a strategy that harnesses this commitment and enthusiasm and addresses the specific needs of the current workforce. This includes ensuring required levels of support and supervision for newly qualified staff, embedding a philosophy of 'doing the basics well' and progressing from compliance to quality. A workforce strategy has been implemented, which includes the establishment of the Social Work Academy and Leadership Academy; mandatory practice focused training for all staff; the review of practice standards; and additional support for ASYEs (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) and less experienced staff through the introduction of twelve Advanced Practitioners. We recognise that there is still more work to be done in this area. Practice is deemed to be compliant but quality continues to be variable and greater consistency of practice across the county is required.

Policy, procedures and practice standards have been reviewed and updated in relation to forced marriage and honour-based violence. Briefings have been issued through the LSCB and training material has been amended. There is now a greater awareness and understanding amongst the workforce.

In order to ensure that children who are privately fostered and their carers are assessed and

visited within required timescales, all cases are now held by one dedicated social worker. This enables a more focused approach and ability to effectively discharge statutory responsibilities in a timely manner.

The use of written agreements with parents has been reviewed and these are closely monitored to ensure that they are not relied on to manage risk when a child in need plan, child protection plan or legal action is required instead. Written agreements are no longer used widely and are not used as a safeguarding tool. The introduction of the Risk Sensible Operating Model, along with improved and increased management oversight, has ensured that where written agreements are in place these are appropriate and used to firm up expectations for the family and record decisions.

Capacity within the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service has increased by 50%, caseloads are within agreed thresholds, reviews are on time, mid-point checks are under-taken and increased challenge and rigour is evident.

The LGA Peer Review and Ofsted monitoring visit in February 2018 support our view that decision making on initial referral has been strengthened through significant improvements to MASH arrangements with Police and Health partners. All children are now referred via a single point of access to the MASH and are screened in a timely way by social workers. This has improved the timeliness of response to children, enabled more effective management oversight of work and supported better quality information sharing between partners.

Increased management capacity has significantly improved oversight, challenge and robust decision making of child in need and child protection cases. Decision making is undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced social workers and managers and ASYEs do not lead on child protection investigations. Complex child in need cases are held by qualified social workers. All other child in need cases are either held by qualified social workers or by family support workers, with management oversight from social workers.

All Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and connected carer assessments are undertaken by the Placement with Family and Friends Team. This has led to improved quality of assessments and consistent thresholds. It has also avoided duplication of assessments and provided an independent view.

New practice guidance has been issued for later life letters and life story books. In addition a transfer protocol and effective tracking has been embedded. The number of CLA with outstanding life story work has significantly reduced, from 200 in 2015 to 3 in 2018. The quality of this work has also improved through enhanced quality assurance processes and revised templates to produce better quality documents.

The establishment of a single Adoption Service has enabled more focused work, improved processes and strategic oversight of the whole adoption system to prevent drift and delay. This has led to a much improved service and significant improvement in all three Adoption Scorecard measures, bringing performance much more in line with national targets.

The vast majority of CLA have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) - 93% as of mid-April 2018; the quality of these plans has significantly improved, as evidenced through internal quality assurance and moderating processes. However, a sharp, continued focus is required in relation to ensuring PEPs are up to date. The Virtual School track all CLA attendance, risk of exclusion,

pupil progress and wellbeing, taking urgent action when required. Clear records are held, and processes are in place in respect of the number of children missing from education, including the introduction of Children Missing Education (CME) panels. Educational attainment for primary age CLA is improving; it is above the national average in every subject area and reading, writing and maths combined in Key Stage 1 and all subject areas apart from writing in Key Stage 2.

The level of support care leavers receive and the information they require to successfully make a transition to independence has been a key focus for the local authority since the last inspection, and outcomes are improving as a result. The creation of a County Leaving Care Development Officer position has supported the development and drive of good practice improvement. Rights and entitlements for care leavers include the offer of a Council Tax Grant for care leavers up to the age of 25, which supports all young people financially with council tax payments, irrespective of their location in the country. Setting up home allowances are to be increased and the Staying Put rate at which carers are paid has been increased in line with the rest of the region. The quality of pathway plans has improved, with greater management oversight and input into all plans.

Lancashire has a dedicated Employment Support Team for CLA and care leavers, which works proactively with the Leaving Care Service to support young people into education, employment or training. Close partnership working is taking place with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Single points of contact (SPOCS) are in every job centre and a process is being developed to make DWP aware of care leavers 8 weeks prior to their 18th birthday, to ensure everything is in place in a timely manner.

The main findings and areas for development following the OFSTED/CQC inspection of SEND services in November 2017 have been accepted. Partnership action has been taken to respond to the twelve significant concerns that were identified, including the development of a formal Written Statement of Action (WSOA), the agreement of a governance structure for the delivery of SEND services; and financial investment from the local authority and six Clinical Commissioning Groups to support immediate improvement requirements. A multi-agency SEND Partnership Board is in place, including representation from parents/ carers and young people, with five thematic working groups established to implement the WSoA through more detailed action plans. The Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) transfers have all been completed, and a detailed audit of plans for vulnerable groups undertaken (including looked after children, care leavers, children in need and child protection cases). The outcomes from the audit are being used to ensure compliance, improve individual case planning and inform staff development requirements.

4. Continuing Improvement

Whilst there is increasing evidence that the service is safe and is operating with increasing effectiveness, it is not yet considered to be consistently good. Work continues to be required to develop and work towards consistent practice being embedded and evident in all quality measures. This includes progressing from compliance to quality social work practice through further embedding the Risk Sensible Operating Model, improving the timeliness and quality of assessments; and ensuring plans are SMART, with the voice of the child evident consistently. Permanence for all children looked after is not yet considered consistently at an early stage nor

reviewed regularly. Embedding the processes and policies already in place to track and ratify permanence will be a priority area of focus for the Council.

Although there is now an increasingly stable workforce with a combination of experienced practitioners and managers, recruiting experienced staff continues to be an issue and retention of staff also requires on-going focus. The development of our Social Work Progression Pathway and Health and Wellbeing Plan will support this, informed by an Organisational Health Check which is currently being completed. We will continue to build on the good work underway to develop the skills and knowledge of our workforce and embed a learning culture. We will ensure that all staff are well supported, including manageable caseloads, improving the frequency and quality of supervision and the delivery of a consistent offer to our ASYEs.

Whilst the quality of performance information has significantly improved, there is still more work to be done to ensure that there is consistent recording on the case management system. Reporting through the system enables effective oversight across Children's Services.

We will continue to build upon our work with partners. Our approach to corporate parenting will be strengthened, our partnership priorities will be refreshed and more robust information and joined up working practices put in place to sharpen the focus on outcomes for children, young people and their families.

There is a corporate commitment to further improve outcomes for our care leavers. Improving the educational attainment at Key Stage 4 and further improving our numbers of CLA and care leavers in education, employment or training will continue to be a priority area. There will be a sharper focus across the education and skills sector for our CLA, SEND, care leavers and other vulnerable groups. Work is progressing on developing and securing whole system support for the Care Leaver Local Offer. This is being co-designed with care leavers and aims to ensure that our young people receive the level of support and information they require to successfully make a transition to independence.

We will continue to ensure that the improvements required for the provision of effective, accessible and consistent SEND services are delivered at pace.

We are ambitious for our children and for our Children's Services. We are determined to listen and learn so we can continue improving the quality of our services to make a positive impact for our children and their families.

Key judgement 1 - The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

Evidence that we are increasingly effective:

Prevention

- The interface between early help and statutory child protection work is clear and differentiated. A Children and Family Wellbeing Service (CFWS) offer and pathway is in place. The CFWS works closely with children's social care teams when cases are being stepped down into this service, enabling any areas of support to continue at this lower level until the case no longer requires targeted intervention and is managed by universal services. The step up from child in need is safely managed through assessment and risk management in conjunction with management oversight.
- A streamlined Common Assessment Framework (CAF) has been introduced, in line with best practice.
- The Risk Sensible Operating Model has been adopted across services to ensure that the help received is proportionate to the level of risk. The Continuum of Need thresholds have been reviewed and updated to bring them in line with the risk sensible approach. Both the Risk Sensible Operating Model and Continuum of Need have been shared with partners.
- Significant investment has been made to support CFWS workforce development through the delivery of training covering child and adolescent development, attachment and Triple P Parenting programme.
- Understanding of thresholds is improving, and the majority of referrals made by partner agencies, other than those made by the police, are appropriate and meet the threshold for children's social care. Most agencies provide enough information about the concerns to enable a decision to be made about next steps for children. The quality of information however remains variable. (Ofsted, Feb 2018). The MASH Service Development Plan includes actions to address this.
- Social work capacity and decision making has been strengthened at the front door and improved significantly (LGA Peer Review, October 2017). All children are now referred via a single point of access to the MASH and are screened in a timely way by social workers. This has improved the timeliness of response to children, enabled more effective management oversight of work and supported better quality information sharing between partners. (Ofsted Monitoring Visit, Feb 2018). Funding has recently been agreed to establish the current MASH model as a permanent arrangement. Quality assurance processes to assess the impact of the revised MASH arrangements are used. Audit activity continues to be effective and provides accurate evaluation of the quality of practice. (Ofsted, Feb 2018). This is also verified by independent moderation of audits.
- Lancashire has attached 8,647 families who meet 2 or more of the Troubled Families criteria to the national Troubled Families Programme. Each of these families has had an allocated lead professional and a whole family assessment. As at 31st March 2018, payment by results claims had been made for 2,097 families (24% of the target for the life of the programme) where significant and sustained progress was evidenced.
- Capacity within the Outreach Team in the Fostering, Adoption, Residential and YOT Service has been expanded and is fully embedded. Effective communication and confidence has been built up across the teams. Referrals into the service and number of children and families receiving outreach prevention support has increased (from 117 in 2015/16 to 190 in 2017/18). The support provided in 91% of closed cases has prevented the young person coming into care.
- The local authority commission Health Visiting and School Nursing Services, who lead the delivery of the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme (HCP), which is a schedule of screening, health development reviews and health promotion. This includes support to children, young people

and families at the different levels of the Continuum of Need, including universal, universal plus and universal partnership plus (where families require a multi-partnership response). Both services engage in CAF processes, provide health contributions to safeguarding processes and named Health Visitors or School Nurses provide family support via Team around the Family or core groups. Examples of practice linked to prevention include parenting support and promotion of attachment, supporting maternal mental health, early advice and support to young people in terms of emotional health and wellbeing and reducing risk taking behaviour. The services follow up as necessary Accident and Emergency/ paediatric notifications and protecting vulnerable people (PVP) referrals.

Purposeful Practice

- Audit findings demonstrate greater management oversight and support of CIN and CP cases. Referrals are tracked from point of entry to ensure effective management oversight and reduce drift. However, whilst timescales have improved, there is still evidence of drift in some case files.
- Children's Services participate fully in LSCB multi-agency audits; action plans are put in place and monitored by the LSCB. Where audit topics have been revisited improved practice has been identified.
- There is an improved performance management culture across Children's Services. Accuracy of data and performance information has improved and is being used more effectively. Localised children's social care Performance Information Meetings (PIMs) support a better understanding of need, identification of trends and comparison to statistical neighbours.
- Clear processes are in place to enable improved scrutiny and challenge from IROs in relation to child protection.
- A revised audit framework is in place for Children's Services and is used to drive improvement in the quality of practice and intervention, utilising input from the Advanced Practitioners. In addition case studies from each district for CFWS cases are used and a CFWS case closure evaluation form is in development.
- Local Authority Designated Officer capacity has increased to 3 FTE posts, ensuring more effective management oversight of the management of allegations against adults working with children.
- When children need help out of hours, this happens quickly and effectively. Information is recorded and followed up appropriately to ensure that children are safe. (Ofsted Feb 2018)
- More timely strategy meetings are held with multi agency partners when thresholds are reached, including police, health and education professionals. However, further work is required to ensure that good information sharing and robust planning is taking place. (Ofsted, Feb 2018). In response, the Principal Social Worker and Audit Team Manager have undertaken briefings in the three localities to reaffirm practice requirements.
- The creation of specialist teams for child protection within children's social care, the implementation of the Social Work Academy, mandatory practice focused training for all staff, introduction of 12 Advanced Practitioners and the revision of practice standards ensures that the workforce is better skilled and supported.
- Increased management capacity has significantly improved oversight, challenge and robust decision making. Decision making is undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced social workers and managers. The number of ASYEs has reduced, from 116 in March 2017 (45.8% of children's social care workforce) to 68.5 in March 2018 (27.2% of children's social care workforce – nearing the target of 25%). ASYEs do not lead on child protection investigations and all complex child in need cases are held by qualified social workers.
- All private fostering cases are held by a dedicated social worker, enabling a more focused approach and ability to effectively discharge statutory responsibilities. We are undertaking briefing events across the districts which will include multi agency partners to further promote

private fostering and the required response, all of which is outlined of the annual report for private fostering.

- Written agreements are used in a more effective way and only when appropriate. Written agreements are no longer used as a safeguarding tool.
- There is a more consistent response to children missing from home (MFH). Statutory requirements are implemented, MFH visits are tracked and information is more effectively shared between agencies. A centralised multi-agency exploitation team has been introduced in one area which has enabled better working relationships with children and their families, more timely strategy discussions and a more immediate, collective response to address and manage risk. This approach is now being rolled out countywide.
- Exploitation training now incorporates all areas of exploitation (sexual, criminal, trafficking, modern day slavery and radicalisation) and will be rolled out by the exploitation team from exploitation hubs from May 2018 and then into locality teams thereafter. Advanced Practitioners have written child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse training and offer live practice examples. Expertise has also been commissioned in areas of exploitation, organised crime and county lines to upskill and inform social work teams and practitioners.
- There is a greater awareness and understanding of radicalisation across services with strong input from Lancashire (Vice Chair role) into the Pan Lancashire Channel programme. The LSCB web-site provides high quality resources and the Prevent for Schools (P4S) website is well-used.
- Our approach to county lines is being scoped and includes a commitment to partnership investment. We are working closely with wider partners and have made a bid to Home Office for Trusted Relationship Fund.
- The Joint Homelessness Protocol is embedded within teams. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is no longer used by children's social care.

Health

- There is a greater awareness and understanding of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Protection Orders. A multi-agency Pan Lancashire FGM pathway has been produced and a multi-agency conference has been held. Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) provide advice and support to partner agencies in relation to FGM referral processes and risk.
- Following a successful pilot, where a health practitioner carried out duty roles a day per week in each children's social care locality base in the North, the health duty role is now embedded practice with health, children's social care and police across the North Lancashire footprint. This supports a timely health response and effective navigation around the health economy, as well as supporting compliance in respect of strategy discussions.
- Health systems and processes are in place to support the implementation and delivery of the MASH redesign. Both Blackpool Teaching Hospital (BTH) and Lancashire Care Foundation Trust (LCFT) has committed full time specialist safeguarding practitioners to support both the Vulnerable Adult and Vulnerable Child agenda. The locality model of working from a health perspective has increased opportunities for smarter ways of working in the future in respect of the MARAC agenda and strategy discussions. It has also allowed opportunity for consistent case management and improved communication for functions that exist outside of the MASH.
- School Nursing services offers a universal health screening questionnaire to parents of reception aged children with follow-up as necessary from this screen. An electronic questionnaire is being rolled out to Year 6 and Year 9 pupils (phasing out a previous paper delivered process), again to promote swift intervention and early identification of need.
- Expectations of workforce safeguarding training, supervision and adopting LSCB policies are contractual requirements of Health Visiting and School Nursing services.

Areas of Development & Improvement:

Prevention

- The LSCB is leading on multi-agency engagement in CAF, to further improve the quality and volume of CAFs across partner agencies. This includes the roll out of refresh training for partners over the next few months and will support the promotion of greater awareness that early help is everyone's responsibility and ensure thresholds are consistently understood.
- Multi-agency Early Help Integrated Teams are being rolled out across the county. However, these are at varying stages of development and not yet consistent across all Districts.
- Due to a high level of vacancies in the CFWS, capacity to hold cases either stepped down from children's social care or request for support is temporarily reduced. The recruitment exercise to fill the vacant posts is currently being progressed. Children's social care and CFWS managers are working closely to ensure demand is managed appropriately.
- An Adolescent Support Unit (ASU) is due to be opened, following Ofsted registration. The ASU will provide respite and outreach support to children and families on the edge of care, based on best practice from other local authorities.
- A bid has been submitted to the Life Chances Fund for the development of an externally commissioned payment by results Edge of Care intervention to better support children and families on the cusp of care.

Purposeful Practice

- The quality of practice is variable. We need to have a stronger focus on tangible outcomes for children – in essence we need to continue to make the cultural shift from compliance to quality with children at the centre (LGA Peer Review, October 2017). A Leadership Academy commenced in April to strengthen the leadership of practice. Advanced Practitioner workshops, reflective supervision and ASYE support groups are also focused on improving quality.
- Whilst child protection rates have been reducing and are lower than regional averages, they remain above national and statistical neighbour averages and are particularly high in some districts. We will continue with the strong drive and focus to improve practice and embed the risk sensible approach.
- Further work is needed across services in relation to the quality and timeliness of assessments. Duty teams have been established across all districts and management teams in districts are utilising a variety of methods to improve timescales. These include monthly performance information meetings, performance clinics to address individual performance issues and development workshops with staff in districts, utilising the support of the Advanced Practitioners.
- Diversity, culture and religious needs are not consistently considered within child and family assessments and plans. This is included within assessment workshops delivered by the Advanced Practitioners and these will be further expanded. Equality and Diversity conferences are held every year for Children's Services staff. Priority workshops for 2018-2019 will seek to develop this further and ensure social workers have an understanding of how diversity must be reflected within their work.
- The vast majority of open cases (85%) have a chronology to support understanding of historical information and case summaries are present on case files. However, further work is required to ensure that these are updated on a more regular basis and are better utilised to inform effective assessment. This is the focus of a one day Advanced Practitioner workshop.

- Children's plans have improved but further work is required to ensure these are smarter, through the work of the Advanced Practitioners, training and better management oversight. Work is also required so that they interlink with other plans, such as Education, Health and Care Plans.
- Improved relationship building with children, young people and families is required so more stable and meaningful relationships with social workers can be developed. This will be supported through improved staff retention and more manageable caseloads.
- Audit findings report that the voice of the child is more evident in written records. However, the voice of the child is not yet consistently evident in CAF/ TAF and actions plans (Children and Families Wellbeing Service audit) and in children's social care teams' written plans. Capturing the lived experience of children is an area of development for all services and is a priority in the current 12 week Improvement Plan.
- More consistent recording on the case management system continues to be required. The introduction of the Early Help module on the Lancashire Children's System (LCS) from September will support this.
- Tracking tools in areas such as pre-proceedings and Public Law outline (PLO) need to be better embedded and used. This is a priority in the current 12 week Improvement Plan.
- More work is required to ensure that MASH arrangements are embedded. (LGA Peer Review, October 2017), including ensuring effective multi agency strategy discussions take place, there is sufficient information sharing with partners to inform investigations and investigations lead to a holistic assessment of risk and need, not just the most recent incident. The consistent use of the Risk Sensible Operating Model needs to be further embedded to ensure consistently good quality practice. (Ofsted Feb 2018). Audit and data findings and good practice has been shared and Advanced Practitioner workshops were held in April 2018 with MASH Practice Managers and social workers. Learning from the workshops are to be reinforced in MASH social worker's supervision. Consistent messages have been shared across Police Divisions in relation to getting the quality and detail right in police referrals and these are being quality assured by police staff in the MASH. A training package for police has been created and will be delivered to Divisions over summer 2018. The MASH Operational Group and Strategic Board will continue to oversee performance relating to MASH, providing appropriate scrutiny and challenge.
- For some children, there has been a delay between incidents of domestic abuse taking place and referrals received by social care staff in the MASH which has led to delay in some children getting support. The Police have now implemented changes to working practice to address the delay into MASH and are quality assuring the information received which has improved timescales for the MASH. However, the understanding of, and response to, children who are experiencing domestic abuse is not well developed. A review of practice in the MASH is required alongside the development of an up to date Domestic Abuse Strategy to ensure a timely, robust and consistent response. Multi-agency domestic abuse training is being delivered to all MASH staff in early May in order to improve understanding and impact of domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Steering Group will have oversight of and agree the joint LCC and Lancashire Constabulary Domestic Abuse Protocol and guidance.
- Whilst arrangements are in place within the MASH to share domestic abuse notifications with schools, the LSCB is considering the use of Operation Encompass (an effective system used in other areas) to streamline this process, improving the timeliness of information sharing and support to children experiencing domestic abuse.
- Whilst the number of referrals into multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) has increased, the number of referrals from children's social care into MARAC is low. Further exploration of this is required in order to ensure that timely information is shared and enable effective partnership planning and risk-based decision making.

- There is evidence of the Outcome Star being used by the Children & Family Wellbeing Service. However, the use of this tool and recording of outcomes is not consistent across the districts. To address this, Outcome Star training is being delivered across all keyworkers. In addition, completion of the Outcome Star is reviewed as part of the case file audit procedure and feedback provided to individual key workers for appropriate action to be taken. The service will implement the Early Help Module as the Management Information System in October 2018 and the recording of outcome measures will be a mandatory aspect of the system utilising the Radar Charts functionality.

Health

- The importance of capturing the voice of the young person is paramount in achieving the best positive outcome for a young person. A priority for 2018/19, will be to ensure that this is consistently evident.
- In the East of the county, the CSE Health Practitioners access to Lancashire County Council's electronic records, for those young people open to the Engage team, remains a challenge. Further training for CSE nurses is required to enable access to the system and is envisaged to have been resolved by June 2018.
- Pathways are currently being formulated to strengthen communication with Exploitation Teams to ensure the specialist CSE nurse is aware of the referral/MASH contact in a timely manner, and therefore able to continue to inform their specialist assessment.

Key judgement 2 - The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence: CLA

Evidence that we are increasingly effective:

Purposeful Practice

- Senior management, Cabinet and the Lead Member have increased knowledge and understanding of our CLA through the introduction of the line of sight framework, ensuring a timely understanding of performance progress and issues.
- The LSCB completed a multi-agency learning review (MALR) on CLA placed in Lancashire from other local authorities who live in an independent children's home, with learning shared with providers. This included engaging with the DfE as the regulatory framework was not sufficient to ensure the children were effectively protected. The LSCB were advised that this would be taken into consideration in the National Review of Children's Homes, led by Sir Martin Narey.
- There is strong commitment and drive to embed doing the basics well. Caseloads are more manageable and staff report that they feel well supported by managers (Annual Social Work Health Check, Ofsted monitoring visits and LGA Peer Review).
- The move from generic teams to the creation of Children in our Care teams in children's social care has enabled social workers to have a closer relationship with CLA, helping to know and better understand them. This was endorsed through the July 2017 Ofsted Monitoring visit, which found that most social workers know the children on their caseloads well and have taken time to understand their wishes and feelings. The Children with Disabilities (CwD) Teams continue to hold a generic caseload of children (with severe and profound disabilities) enabling children to have the same social worker if they progress to becoming CLA. This benefits the child and family through continuity of relationships and knowledge about the child's SEND and communication needs.

- For the vast majority of CLA, statutory requirements are completed in a timely way. Visits to children are taking place regularly, and children are seen alone by their social workers. (Ofsted Monitoring Visit July 2017).
- The Risk Sensible Operating Model is now in place and can be seen across the service (LGA Peer Review, October 2017).
- Practice guidance has been reviewed and updated to ensure it is consistent and easy to understand. A Social Work Academy and the establishment of 12 Advanced Practitioner posts have been established to train and support practice improvement to enable progress from compliance to quality.
- Children and young people have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them, organised through district contact teams and, where required, commissioned contact for more complex arrangements.
- Following the completion of a MALR by the LSCB, clear practice standards have been agreed regarding conduct of Section 47 enquiries in respect of CLA from other local authorities placed within Lancashire.
- Discharge plans for children subject to Care Orders and placed with parents are being tracked and more are returning to court for revocation of the order. For example, since March 2017, circa a fifth of home placements have been discharged in East Lancashire (52 Home Placements, 39 of which were Care Orders and 13 were Interim Care Orders). A further 22 placements are pending discharge, in that either the application has been lodged with court or is being prepared for court.
- Audit is purposeful and beginning to have an impact on practice quality (LGA Peer Review, October 2017)
- Data is significantly improved and is being used to improve practice (LGA Peer Review, October 2017)
- Independent Reviewing Officers bring rigour and challenge to care planning.
- Safeguarding for our CLA is monitored and progressed with management and IRO oversight.
- The SEND Integrated Assessment and Monitoring (IA&M) Service is undertaking a compliance audit of all cases jointly open to SEND and children's social care/ Children with Disabilities (CwD)/ Children Awaiting Adoption Team to support data accuracy between Lancashire Children's System (LCS), IMPULSE and the SEND Single File and to follow up any gaps in advice to inform the child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The audit of all cases will be completed by the 30th June 2018, with follow up actions completed by the autumn half-term.

Permanence

- Fostering assessments are of increasingly good quality and fostering panel processes are robust, as evidenced in fostering panel reports. Active engagement from the Communications Team has supported recruitment, including the targeted recruitment of carers for older children and sibling groups.
- A single Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and connected carer assessment tool is in place to streamline processes and avoid duplication.
- Recruitment of Lancashire foster carers has outperformed the region. There has been an increase in the number of mainstream assessments presented, from 30 in 2016/17 to 92 in 2017/18 - a percentage increase of 206%. Alongside this, the fostering service has proactively supported and encouraged carers to look after a wider range of children, within their capabilities.
- The foster carer review process has improved. Carers are invited to reviews and there is a set agenda to ensure a clear focus. However further work is required to ensure effectiveness.
- Enhanced placement finding systems are established through the development of the Access to Resources Team (ART), better supporting the local authority to source hard to find placements. The formation of ART has also resulted in much improved intelligence on placement finding

and gaps in provision. This information is being proactively used to inform commissioning and shape the CLA provider market to better meet need. Positive feedback has been received from providers of CLA placements on Lancashire's approach to sharing demand intelligence and seeking to work proactively with providers to address gaps in provision.

- 90% of in-house children's homes are good or outstanding. The one LCC home judged to require improvement was found to have improved effectiveness at the interim inspection in March 2018. The majority of CLA placed in agency provision are in good or outstanding provision (83% Agency Residential; 82% Agency Fostering).
- New commissioning arrangements go live in May 2018 to better support the sourcing of complex fostering placements and enable children and young people to step down from residential provision into an enhanced fostering placement.
- Long term placement stability has improved, with more children remaining in placement for more than two years. This has increased from 65.6% in March 2016 to 73.7% in March 2018, although there was a slight decrease on the previous year's figure of 75.5%.
- All SGO and connected carer assessments are undertaken by the Placement with Family and Friends Team. This has led to improved quality of assessments and consistent thresholds. It has also avoided duplication of assessments and provided an independent view. Cabinet has approved the establishment of this team on a permanent basis and an increase in the resources of the team.

Education

- The latest education data (2016/17 cohort) shows that 90.5% of Key Stage 1 CLA and 92.2% of Key Stage 2 CLA are placed in good or better schools. The vast majority of primary aged pupils are educated in Lancashire (81.1% in Key Stage 1 and 89.6% in Key Stage 2) and significantly exceed both regional and national averages.
- Lancashire Key Stage 1 CLA achieved above national CLA average attainment in every subject area and reading, writing and maths combined, with the most marked area being writing, where 52.8% achieved nationally expected levels compared to 39% nationally. Analysis of achievement trends for Key Stage 1 CLA from previous year shows increased attainment at a greater rate than nationally in all subject areas. Lancashire Key Stage 1 CLA, who had been in care for at least 12 months, made greater progress than those with similar starting points nationally, in all subject areas. Maths demonstrates a significant increase for Key Stage 1 CLA, this being an area of concern in 2015/16 and a target for the allocation of additional Pupil Premium Grant for primary pupils.
- Lancashire Key Stage 2 CLA achieved above national CLA achievement in all subject areas apart from writing. Achievement trends for this cohort shows increased achievement from 2015/16 levels in all subjects other than writing and increased achievement at greater than national rate in Maths and Reading, Writing and Maths combined. There has been decreased achievement in writing (teacher assessed). However, the average progress in writing for the cohort improved and exceeds that of national CLA progress in writing from children's starting points.
- The vast majority of CLA have a PEP (93% as of mid-April 2018) and the quality of these has significantly improved since the time of the last inspection, as evidenced through internal quality assurance and moderating processes showing 94.6% as good or better in Spring 2018 compared to 63.5% in Autumn 2015.
- The Virtual School track all CLA attendance, risk of exclusion, pupil progress and wellbeing. Urgent action, tailored to the individual, is taken when children are not achieving well.
- Clear records are held in respect of the numbers of children receiving alternative education and for those missing from education. Processes

are in place in relation to Children Missing Education (CME), through the Virtual School and the establishment of the CME Panel. Between November 2017 and April 2018, 103 cases were discussed at the CME Panel and to date has resulted in 50% (52) of the cases now no longer missing education.

- The tracking and monitoring of Children Missing out on Education (CMOOE) – often referred to as "pupils missing out on education" - is governed by a service protocol and overseen by the lead for Access and Attendance; CLA, those in Alternative Provision are tracked and monitored by the Virtual School Head Teacher and those with SEND by the service lead.
- The Employment Support Team provide good support to CLA and care leavers aged 14-25. Between April 2017 and March 2018, the team supported 241 CLA/Leaving Care young people and so far has directly assisted 50 CLA/Leaving Care young people into employment. (NB this does not include any employment directly sourced by the young person themselves). 33 of the 50 positions were in the private sector at a variety of employers in sectors such as construction, retail, care, hairdressing; and 3 within schools; 1 within the NHS and 13 within Lancashire County Council.

Health

- There is an established communication pathway between CLA, CSE and YOT Practitioners. This enables health assessments to be undertaken by the most appropriate professional to meet the needs and increased vulnerabilities of the individual.
- From December 2017, weekly conference calls have been set up between health and children's social care in North Lancashire to enable improved notification of all children who have recently become CLA and support timelier completion of statutory health assessments and identification of health needs. In addition bi-monthly tracking meetings take place between children's social care and health to monitor outstanding health assessments.
- The four local authority children's social care teams in East Lancashire have co-located, through specifically commissioned health practitioners within the team to allow access to health information, support with referrals to relevant agencies and direct clinical involvement where there is an unmet health need. These Safeguarding health practitioners have co-worked and contributed from a Health perspective in 838 cases over the period 2017/18.

The Voice of our Children and Young People

- Children's attendance and contribution at their CLA reviews has improved from 95% in 2016 to 98.3% in 2018.
- A strong Children in Care Council (LINX) is in place and young people are regularly consulted on how to improve the support they receive. LINX has a regular slot on the Corporate Parenting Board and lead a full board meeting once a year.
- POWAR (Lancashire's participation group for children and young people who have SEN and/or disabilities) gives individual young people the opportunity to share opinions about issues that affect them. POWAR has produced resources in relation to child sexual exploitation and healthy relationships for children who have SEN and/or disabilities. These young people are a force for good in the local area. (SEND Inspection Jan 2018).
- Young people have been activity engaged in shaping the Fostering Service from staff recruitment, input into the recruitment of carers and leading a session at a foster carer conference to encourage carers to foster teenagers. This good practice was recognised through the winning of the Youth On Board Inspiring Project Award.

- Since 2015, 21 members of the children in care council (LINX) have been trained as Young Inspectors and have undertaken 20 inspections of CLA placement providers (4 fostering providers; 15 children's homes and 1 supported accommodation provider) and developed a set of recommendations about how each service could be improved from a children and young people's perspective. Follow up visits have shown that recommendations have been taken on board and practice improved as a result. (Young Inspectors evaluation report)
- Supported by LSCB funding, Lancashire has become the best performing local authority in relation to the use of the digital consultation tool - Mind of My Own (MOMO), to support young people to get their voices heard. The authority has been nominated for an award: swiftest implementation of MOMO. The use of MOMO has been well received by children and young people and has been built into CLA and Child Protection (CP) processes, alongside other participation tools. Since September 2017, 214 young people accounts have been set up and 338 documents have been sent from these accounts. Young people are using the tool to raise issues, prepare for meetings, make complaints and share good news stories.
- A participation feedback form has been devised in hard copy format for the child/young person to complete following contact with the CLA Nurse. Feedback will be used to identify areas for development and will be shared with appropriate multi- agency partners/Designated Nurses for CLA located within the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- There is evidence recorded within the individual CLA, CSE and YOT health assessment documentation to support that the child/young person's view has been sought. Any issues identified are discussed directly with the relevant partner agency or addressed within the child/YP statutory planning or review meeting, where the young person would be supported to voice their views or the CLA/CSE/YOT Nurse would act as an advocate on behalf of the child/young person.

Areas of Development & Improvement:

Purposeful Practice

- CLA numbers are considered to be too high. At the end of March 2018, there were 1,968 children looked after, a rate of 79.7 per 10,000. The Sufficiency Strategy and CLA Residential Strategy include actions to reduce numbers of children in care.
- Recruiting and retaining staff, particularly team managers and practice managers, continues to be a challenge. Support has been commissioned from agency providers to assist whilst permanent staff are recruited. Effective contract monitoring and tracking processes have ensured that commissioned services effectively deliver requirements.
- We need to continue to improve and evidence the effectiveness of management oversight and decision making that ensures children are being supported and protected appropriately and are able to achieve the best possible outcomes. Becoming Looked After Panels and monthly Resource Panels within children's social care provide greater management oversight to address issues of drift and delay but need to be further developed to ensure effectiveness and consistency across the county. The use of trackers to support legal, fostering, adoption and children's social care have been developed but need to be further embedded. This is a priority within the current 12 Week Improvement Plan.
- The Risk Sensible Operating Model needs to be embedded with partners and evolve to support more strength based practice. The Advanced Practitioners are supporting the LSCB rollout of the model.

- The LGA Peer Review feedback deemed that we are compliant but the quality is variable and recording does not sufficiently reflect the quality of practice. Whilst social workers are able to talk with confidence about the children they are working with, the work completed is not always fully reflected in case records. Advanced Practitioner workshops are being delivered to ensure that consistently good practice is embedded.
- The quality of care plans is improving through purposeful practice work and greater workforce stability. However, this still remains variable. An Advanced Practitioner workshop has been developed on SMART plans and IRO oversight has been strengthened to promote consistency of practice across the county.
- Further work is required to ensure that diversity, cultural and religious needs are routinely considered in all assessments and plans. This is included within assessment workshops delivered by the Advanced Practitioners and these will be further expanded. Equality and Diversity conferences are held every year for Children's Services staff. Priority workshops for 2018-2019 will seek to develop this further and ensure social workers have an understanding of how diversity must be reflected within their work.
- More effective joined up planning and partnership working for children and young people with complex needs is required to ensure timely intervention, effective commissioning and support the best possible outcomes for these young people. Consideration is being given to combining decision and partnership working forums to support this practice improvement.
- More work is required to ensure consistency in the quality of care applications to court. Too often plans are rejected or criticised and manager statements are required, although the number of requests for such statements has fallen more recently.
- More work is still required to understand needs and trends in relation to missing from home. The move to centralised exploitation teams will support this as evidence from the establishment of an exploitation team in one locality has shown that information gathered and analysis of risk has informed mapping and a clear knowledge and understanding of the risks in relation to people and places of concern across the districts.
- The percentage of young people on YOT orders who are CLA has increased and is now more in line with the national average percentage (35.7%). This increase is due to the numbers of young people known to YOT significantly decreasing, and as a consequence the percentage of those which are CLA has increased as part of this smaller cohort. There is an established 'In Care Out of Trouble' multi-agency group to oversee this area and address issues for this cohort of young people.
- Our approach to corporate parenting is being strengthened to ensure that it actively challenges and engages partners to support children and young people. Our new Corporate Parenting Strategy, formed in partnership with young people in our care and our care leavers, has been drafted for consultation and sets out how Lancashire intends to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities in a way that puts children and young people at the centre of improvements in the planning, delivery and evaluation of our services.

Permanence

- Clear processes and policies are in place in relation to tracking and ratifying permanence but are not embedded into practice.
- Life story work needs embedding for children looked after who have a plan for permanence that is not adoption.
- In line with the rest of the North West region, there are significant gaps in placement provision, particularly for our most complex young people. A refreshed Sufficiency Strategy and CLA Residential Strategy are in place and agreed by Cabinet, with clear actions to address identified gaps in provision.

- The number of CLA with 3 or more placement moves within the last 12 months has increased from 5.4% in 2015/16 to 7.9% in March 2018. Plans are in place through the Sufficiency Strategy to shape the market to better meet need and prevent unnecessary placement breakdowns. A review of placement disruptions is taking place to inform plans to minimise unplanned moves in future.

Education

- Further work is required to increase the number of CLA in education, employment and training to beyond the national average of 50%.
- 21.6% of new CLA placements in 2017/18 were outside of the local authority area. Clearer processes and support are required from partners, including closer involvement in placement planning, to ensure that health and education support for children placed out of area is secured with minimal delay.
- Educational measures for Key Stage 4 CLA will continue to be a priority area. The percentage of CLA are placed in good or better schools (54.2%) is lower when compared to primary age CLA and a lower percentage of pupils are educated in the local authority area (83.3%). However, this is still significantly higher than the regional (68%) and national average (63%). Attainment is below national average, as measured by Attainment 8 and Progress 8, and is significantly below national average in other attainment measures. Lancashire CLA educated in good or better schools achieve higher Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores and increased scores in other attainment measures, closer to national averages. 45.8% of the Lancashire Key Stage 4 cohort have special education needs, which is significantly higher than the national figure of 37.5%. Lancashire CLA with SEN achieve less well on average than pupils with SEN nationally. Nationally and in Lancashire all measures of attainment and Progress8 declined, with the exception of the percentage entered for EBAC, which was greater in Lancashire than the national average. The decline in attainment in Lancashire was greater than the national average.
- A sharp focus continues to be required on the number of up to date PEPs, with the system showing only 48.5% of CLA with an up to date PEP as of mid April 2018. Whilst work to ensure PEPs are updated on time is required, the system for recording PEPs also needs improving to remove the requirement to record in two places.

Health

- There has been a slight improvement in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) scores of our CLA (from 14 in 2015/16 to 13.5 in 2016/17, the most recent published) which is better than the national average score of 14.1. Return rates for SDQs in Lancashire are higher than the national average (77.9% compared to 75%). However, further collaboration with health partners, including greater sharing and utilisation of SDQ results is required to ensure that the emotional health and wellbeing of our CLA is addressed.
- The local authority Supporting Carers and Young People Together (SCAYT+) Service continues to deliver effective support.
- Child Adolescent and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) vary across the county and an increased amount of therapy has been commissioned by the local authority in order to ensure that the emotional health and wellbeing needs of CLA are met.
- The LSCB has drawn the attention of the Health and Wellbeing Board to current concerns re CAMHS and continues to monitor progress towards a more equitable and timely service.
- There is a need to work collaboratively to address the decreasing number of up to date health assessments (from 95.1% in March 2017 to 77.1% in March 2018), including building on and extending the good practice established in specific locality areas. This is being driven

through the strategic Permanence and Corporate Parenting Board, which includes strong health representation.

The Voice of our Children and Young People

- Whilst there is increasing evidence of children's views being sought, more work is required to ensure that the lived experience of the CYP is captured and informs their plans. This is a priority in the current 12 Week Improvement Plan.
- Further work is planned on how the recently obtained views of looked after children and young people on the CLA Nurse Service can influence future service development and improve outcomes.

Key judgement 2 - The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence: Adoption Performance

Evidence that we are increasingly effective:

- All three Adoption Scorecard measures have significantly improved since the last inspection:
 - The average time a child enters care and moves in with their adoptive family has reduced from 571 days in 2015/16 to 426 days in 2017/18, very close to the national target of 425 days;
 - The number of days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family has reduced from 267 days in 2015/16 to 156 days in 2017/18, significantly closer to the national target of 121 days but there is still work to reduce this further;
 - The percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family has increased from 34% in 2015/16 to 63% in 2017/18, exceeding the national target of 60%.

Purposeful Practice

- A single Adoption Service has been established, which has brought together teams from across children's services. The single service has enabled more focused work, improved processes and strengthened strategic oversight of the whole adoption system to prevent drift and delay.
- A performance management culture has been developed throughout the service. Monthly meetings are held to monitor all cases with a 'should be placed for adoption' (SHOPA) decision. Performance and compliance clinics have been established, enabling more focus and accountability to managers.
- Paperwork is now submitted to court via secure email to prevent delay.
- New practice guidance has been issued for later life letters, life story book and transfer protocol and effective tracking has been embedded. Numbers of outstanding life story work have significantly reduced from 200 in 2015 to 3 in 2018. The quality of this work, and the documents themselves, has also improved through improved quality assurance processes and the revision of the document template.

Permanence

- A whole systems Permanence Tracker and clear processes have been developed to enable the tracking of every case from pre-proceedings

onwards.

- Notifications are now received on all children becoming looked after and all under 5s are tracked if they have an adoption plan.
- Lancashire was one of the first adoption services nationally to develop early permanence and concurrent planning for adoption. A Helpful Hints Guide has been produced to assist children's social care colleagues in understanding early care planning in respect of adoption. This has led to an increase in the number of cases being referred by children's social care for early permanence options such as concurrency and fostering to adopt. Numbers of placements have increased significantly from 3 fostering to adopt and 3 concurrent placements in 2015/16 to 19 fostering to adopt and 9 concurrent placements in 2017/18.
- Work has also been undertaken with the judiciary to promote a better understanding of early permanence options.
- A Team Manager attends an Adoption Forum, led by the judiciary, where issues can be presented and fed back into practice. Lancashire hosts an annual pan Lancashire conference on adoption, including CAFCASS and the judiciary.
- Analysis has been undertaken on the reasons for delay on children who have taken the longest to secure permanence. Analysis carried out last year found that half of cases were due to the complexity of need or specific bespoke requirements. However half were due to unnecessary drift and delay. Processes have been revised as a result and there is expected to be further improvement on the numbers due to drift and delay in this year's analysis.
- An adoption recruitment strategy has been developed, utilising predicted need. In 2017/18, the target to recruit 50 mainstream adopters was exceeded by 6, alongside the recruitment of 15 early permanence adopters.
- The quality of assessments presented to the adoption panel is consistently good as evidenced through the twice yearly adoption panel report. In 2017/18 there were 64 reports that were graded excellent compared to 42 in 2016/17 and 33 were graded very good compared to 30 the previous year. The quality of adoption support plans has also improved through quality assurance and challenge from the adoption panel. This has included the more timely use of referrals to the adoption support fund, where possible at the point of SHOPA decision.
- Revised processes have also supported improved practice in relation to post adoption support. Good use has been made of the Post Adoption Support Fund (ASF), with year on year rises in the number of families referred for services through the fund (Adoption Support Fund Report). The effective use of the ASF now needs to be extended to support Special Guardianship Order arrangements.
- There is now less delay in finding harder to place children and young people an adoptive placement. There has been an increase in the percentage of harder to place children placed in timescale from 45% in 2015/16 to 71% in 2017/18. Activity days and events have been used effectively to find matches for harder to place children. Of 33 children and sibling groups presented at the events, 3 have progressed to positive matches and there were 4 children who expressed an interest but did not lead to a positive match.
- The University of Central Lancashire has delivered a briefing session to the Children Awaiting Adoption Team regarding cross cultural placements. This has informed matching and decision making processes and has informed workforce training. 6 children were placed with adopters of a different ethnicity to the child in 2015/16. There was an increase of 3 children in 2016/17 and 2 children in 2017/18.

The Voice of our Children and Young People

- As evidenced through the adoption panel report, robust and effective adoption panels are held, led by an experienced panel chair. Several members of the panel are adults who have been adopted and the panel includes a young person aged over 18 in a staying put arrangement. In addition, young people have developed a set of questions for the adoption panel to enable an increased focus on the child during decision making processes.

Areas of Development & Improvement:

Purposeful Practice

- Whilst the adoption service has existing mechanisms in place to monitor performance and enable effective oversight, the availability of management reports from the Lancashire Child System (LCS) would further assist this. Work to date has focused on addressing management reports relating to children's social care but this will now be extended to adoption services.
- The quality of Child Permanence Reports (CPR) is variable. Workforce training is being provided to address this and reports are quality assured by the adoption panel adviser, with detailed feedback given. More robust senior management oversight has also been implemented which has led to an improvement in quality.
- Further work is required to improve processes in relation to carrying out effective sibling assessments to determine whether siblings are best placed separately or together.
- A process to support birth parents has been revised and needs to be shared with children's social care colleagues and embedded into practice.
- Development of the Lancashire/ Blackpool Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). Funding to progress this has been agreed and a Project Team is in the process of being established to drive the design and implementation of the new RAA, with a strong focus on delivering best practice.

Permanence

- A clear transfer system is in place however on occasions there are delays in cases being up to date and ready for transfer from children's social care to the Children Awaiting Adoption Team at agreed transfer points. A process of escalation has now been developed and implemented to alert Heads of Service and managers and avoid unnecessary delay.
- A timeline for early permanence has been developed and shared, which details different team responsibilities at each step of the process. This timeline and key actions are not yet embedded in children's social care and further work is required to ensure that all staff are aware of their required actions.
- The use of the whole system Permanence Tracker is not yet consistently established across Children's Services.

Health

- The timeliness of adoption medicals is variable. The adoption medical process has been revised and guidance is clearer for social workers making requests. As this is a recent development, it is too early to say whether this has reduced delay.
- There is commitment from health colleagues to deal with adoption medicals in a more timely manner. However, further work is required to ensure consistent communication mechanisms are embedded.

Key judgement 2 - The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence: The experiences and progress of care leavers

Evidence that we are increasingly effective:

- Key measures of progress for care leavers (aged 19-21) has shown sustained performance using the thresholds set by the Improvement Board. Latest local analysis (March 2018) shows:
 - 89.9% lived in suitable accommodation, an increase from 78% in March 2016 and 85% in March 2017
 - 50.0% were in education, employment or training, an increase from 40% in March 2017
 - 93.6% had contact with the local authority in the last three months, an increase from 87% in March 2016 and 89% in March 2017.The improved support now available is also evidenced through feedback from young people.

Purposeful Practice

- The creation of a County Leaving Care Development Officer position has supported the development and drive of good practice improvements, alongside the move from generic to specialist teams, which is enabling greater workforce experience and confidence.
- 94.5% of care leavers who are CLA have been allocated a personal adviser. Guidance clearly states that CLA are allocated a personal adviser at 15 ¾ and this is done in a timely manner for the vast majority of CLA. Tracking of cases is undertaken regularly and action taken to address where these timescales have been exceeded.
- The quality of pathway plans has improved with greater management oversight and input into all plans. Resource Panel processes within children's social care are also supporting the development and agreement of more tailored support for individual young people who require more bespoke arrangements e.g. remaining in their CLA placement post 18.
- There is increased multi-agency involvement in pathway planning across the board but particularly for those in prison, facilitating earlier release dates due to the quality of planning.
- All personal advisers and some CLA social workers have received training from a specialist consultant. This training will be further rolled out to other social workers to aid early preparation for independence and transitions. CwD social workers, managers and fieldwork support officers have also had training from this consultant which was targeted towards the specific needs of care leavers with severe and profound disabilities. Further training is planned for new staff to the service.
- Lancashire is part of the CATCH 22 national leaving care benchmarking forum, which collates care leaver information and shares learning and good practice with participating local authorities. Lancashire will host an upcoming Benchmarking Forum Event for young people in County Hall in May which will focus on financial issues, including benefits and handling finances. There will be an opportunity to share good practice and ideas across participating local authorities. Lancashire's care leaver apprentices will be facilitating part of this event.

Local Offer

- Rights and entitlements for care leavers are included on LCC's Youth Zone, including the offer of a Council Tax grant for care leavers up to

the age of 25, which supports all young people financially with council tax payments, irrespective of their location in the country.

- Financial procedures have been rewritten and are due to be ratified at Cabinet by September. The new procedures include increasing the setting up home allowance by £400 to £2,450.

Accommodation

- The Staying Put Policy has been amended and the rate at which carers are paid has been increased in line with the rest of the region. As of 31st March 2018, there were 54 Staying Put arrangements in place.
- There is now much closer working with district housing teams across the county, leading to better understanding and greater partnership working. The Joint Homelessness Protocol has been revised in partnership with District Housing partners, to provide a clear pathway for homeless 16/17 year olds and care leavers. There is on-going work across the county to embed these practices and local protocols are in place to prioritise the housing needs of care leavers.

Health

- At the care leaver's final health assessment a Summary of Health letter is given to the individual and, with consent from the young person, this is also shared with their personal advisor and GP. Information is also given regarding key health professionals and contacts. The individual can access the Looked After Children Nurse service up to the age of 25 years.
- Looked after children nurses are part of a multi-agency task and finish group to devise the local offer for care leavers.

Education, Employment and Training

- Increased capacity to enable a greater focus on 16+ education has been established in the Virtual School team. The Virtual School Leader for 16+ education meets termly with Further Education colleges to discuss issues and provide training and advice on PEPs. Progress, attendance and wellbeing figures are tracked for all 16+ in education.
- Lancashire has a dedicated Employment Support Team for CLA and care leavers (aged 14-25), which works proactively with the Leaving Care Service to support young people into education, employment or training. Between April 2017 and March 2018 the team supported 241 CLA/Leaving Care young people and so far have directly supported 50 CLA/Leaving Care young people into employment. (NB this does not include any employment directly sourced by the young person themselves). 33 of the 50 positions were in the private sector at a variety of employers in sectors such as construction, retail, care, hairdressing; and 3 within schools; 1 within the NHS and 13 within Lancashire County Council.
- The council has recruited five care leavers as apprentices. As well as supporting administrative duties, these apprentices will support the development of the Local Offer and participation opportunities for care leavers across the county to further enhance the voice of children and young people.
- Close partnership working is taking place with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). A county lead from the DWP has been established who meets regularly with children's social care. Single points of contact (SPOCS) are in every job centre. A process is being developed to make DWP aware of care leavers 8 weeks prior to their 18th birthday to ensure everything is in place in a timely manner.
- Multi-agency NEET Panels have been piloted in Central Lancashire. These panels make holistic plans for young people who are NEET (for

reasons other than illness or disability) to address barriers to accessing education, employment and training. 46% (16 out of 35) of the cases discussed in October are either now in employment, education or training (10), reclassified as G4 NEET due to illness and disability (5) or closed to the service (1). NEET Panels will be rolled out county wide from July 2018.

- Partnership working with the 3 local higher education institutions aimed at addressing barriers to care leavers going on to higher education has been strengthened. In line with national trends, the number of care leavers attending higher education has fallen slightly (from 41 in 2016/17 to 40 in 2017/18). However, the numbers starting university in 2017/18 increased from 14 in 2016/17 to 16 in 2017/18, despite a reduction in the financial support now available.

The Voice of our Children and Young People

- There is an increased use of the voice of the child in pathway plans but there is still further work to do to ensure that this is consistently evident.
- A range of communication methods have been established with care leavers to encourage more positive and regular engagement with services. These include the use of social media, Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger and a dedicated Facebook page established for each of the three areas to compliment long standing methods of communication. Lancashire has also established local participation groups that will feed into the LINX Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Board, to make these more accessible across county.
- Care leavers attend the Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.
- Care leavers have been instrumental in informing the development of the Professional Advisor Hubs and Local Offer.
- Over 60 care leavers from across the county took part in 'Sincerely You', where they wrote a letter to themselves on the day they came into care. These letters were made into an exhibition and displayed in five public buildings across the county. Some letters were published in The Big Issue North and a video was made and is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LD_bM_0TjtU The letters will be used as part of the Social Work Academy to support Social Workers in understanding the needs of children as they enter the care system and in foster carer training.
- The achievements of 46 care leavers were celebrated at the PROUD awards 2017.

Areas of Development & Improvement:

- We are ambitious for our care leavers and will continue to build on the good work to date, to further improve key measures and become better than the national average.

Purposeful Practice

- A refreshed CLA and Care Leavers Strategy is in development, to be finalised by summer 2018.
- There remains work to be done to ensure consistency of approach to the delivery of Leaving Care Services across the three areas. Monthly meetings are being held to address this. The SEND CwD Strategic Lead (Senior Manager) attends these meetings to ensure practice within CwD is aligned with leaving care teams and CwD issues are considered in wider service developments.

- Further work is required to ensure that an increased number of CLA aged 16 years and older have an active pathway plan or joint CLA/ Pathway Plan. As of 25th April 2018, 17% of 16+ CLA (151 out of 907) did not have an active pathway plan or CLA/ Pathway Plan recorded on the system. This will continue to be prioritised, closely monitored and addressed through the provision of training from a specialist consultant, targeted at all social workers working with children in care and personal advisors.
- The system which records keeping in touch meetings needs improving. Due to the requirement that contacts with young people are recorded in two places, the system is reporting lower performance than actual levels. We will utilise LCS Case note recording system as we do currently for our Child protection and child looked after statutory visits so that a more accurate recording of keeping in touch data will be recorded.
- There is a need to evaluate the implementation to date of the ASDAN preparation for independence scheme, to be used with all CLA (where appropriate) from the age of 16. The evaluation will include the training needs of both carers and the workforce.
- Further Staying Put training for children's social care staff is required to manage expectations of children and young people approaching 18. This will be included in the training from the specialist consultant, referenced above.

Local Offer

- Work is underway to develop the Local Offer, which is being co-designed with care leavers. A visit is to take place from the DfE lead in May 2018 to review work undertaken to date and offer further advice. Webpages for young people are being designed to promote the Local Offer, and will include an animated video, voiced by young people.
- Better links are in place with Adult Services; children's social care staff are referring into Adult Services earlier to enable improved transitions for young people, although this continues to be an area for development, specifically to secure better transitional arrangements for those exploited or at risk of exploitation. As part of this work, we are planning development of a Care Leaver Protocol for the Adult Transitions Service, Adult Safeguarding Service and Adult Social Care Team.
- There remain difficulties for some young people with severe and profound disabilities in defining transition plans. Work needs to be undertaken to improve the transition of these most complex young people. Our aim is to ensure adult social care assessments take place on time and the transition of young people to adult social care placements is timely and tracked through plans and reviews.

Accommodation

- Availability of accommodation varies across the county. Whilst the workforce operates creatively within the limitations of local housing stock, there is a need to develop a wider range of options, including supported lodgings and by working with the adult Shared Lives Service.

Health

- A significant theme emerging from the health assessments is concerns around emotional health and well-being, and access to services. Transition between child and adult health remains a concern; however, this is being addressed through the CAMHS transformation plan.

Education

- In line with best practice, Lancashire has moved away from using pathway plans to capture educational information for care leavers and now

requires all care leavers to have a PEP throughout Year 12 and 13. However, based on the percentage of PEPs received by the Virtual School for this cohort (43% of Year 12 CLA and 38% of Year 13 CLA), further work is required to ensure that this is embedded.

The Voice of our Children and Young People

- Children and young people led training is being provided for Elected Members and Chief Executives of District Councils at the end of April to promote corporate parenting responsibilities. The training will include refreshing the current Care Leaver Pledge.

Key judgement 3 - Leadership, management and governance

Evidence that we are increasingly effective:

Leadership

- The Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board has set out a clear vision and strategy to enable all partners to work better together to deliver real improvements to the health and wellbeing of Lancashire's citizens and communities. Alongside this, the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board and a strong, dynamic and effective Improvement Board has driven improvement in children's services, ensuring that children, young people and families in need of help are safe, healthy and supported to achieve.
- The Improvement Board has scrutinised the development and delivery of a robust Improvement Plan and shorter term twelve week plans.
- The Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board has ensured agencies in Lancashire are working together effectively to keep children safe. Focusing on areas identified through case reviews and multi-agency audits, the LSCB provides challenge to partners and has driven positive change through the development and implementation of multi-agency procedures and associated training.
- Strengthened senior leadership is in place, which included additional early support from an experienced Director of Children's Services from a neighbouring, good local authority. The Children's Services Senior Management Team is permanent, secure and experienced, led by the Director of Children's Services, with additional capacity from experienced Improvement Partners. An enhanced corporate leadership structure is now in place, with a new post of Executive Director of Children's Services and Education, reporting directly to the Chief Executive.
- Children's Services are a key agency in the LSCB, and the Board is well-supported by all agencies.
- Visibility of senior leadership is improving through employee conferences, webcasts, blogs, weekly emails and other communications, promoting understanding and appropriate responses to key challenges. Staff feel management are accessible and setting clearer directions and expectations. (LGA Peer Review, October 2017)
- Since the last inspection, there has been significant financial investment of £9.9m to strengthen capacity across Children's Services - including an additional £7.259m to cover recurring additional staffing and £2.644m for non-recurring additional staffing. In addition to this, the Council's has invested in placement and allowances budgets as needed to address significant demand pressures and provided capital investment of £0.1m to support the delivery of the Lancashire CLA Residential Strategy 2017-19.
- There are clear lines of accountability between political and strategic leadership roles, supported through weekly Cabinet Member briefings and quarterly safeguarding meeting bringing together the LSCB, Cabinet Members and the Chief Executive, thus ensuring strong oversight

of organisational and partnership issues which may impact on safeguarding.

Knowledge

- Leaders, including Elected Members and managers, have knowledge of what is happening at the front line. A clear line of sight framework is in place which includes performance metrics, audit findings, direct observation of practice, feedback, deep dive and external challenge and reviews. Plans are in place to extend these processes to Heads of Service. Elected Members have clear oversight of performance through the Cabinet Committee for Performance Improvement and Scrutiny Committee arrangements.
- Knowledge of ourselves has improved through a clear performance management framework, improved accuracy of data and a robust audit framework. Monthly Practice Improvement Meetings take place in each locality to enable managers to better understand local performance data, highlight areas of good practice and challenge underperformance.
- The Access to Resources Team, established in 2017, is providing significantly improved placement finding and demand intelligence to better shape the market and inform commissioning.
- As part of the Neighbourhood Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) developed in 2017, a dashboard has been created to visualise health, education and social care data for children and young people <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/health-and-care/children-and-young-people-dashboard/>
- Knowledge of our communities is used to inform service developments. For example, based on a robust analysis of our CLA population, our CLA Sufficiency Strategy sets out clear priorities and is driving commissioning activity.

Purposeful Practice

- We have committed and enthusiastic staff at all levels (LGA Peer Review, October 2017).
- We are responding appropriately to new demands. For example, support provided to children at risk of sexual exploitation has been reviewed and through this areas for improvement identified. As a result, a new approach has been implemented for those working with these vulnerable children that is based on national research, inspection findings and effective practice in other local authorities. A multi-agency action plan has been agreed through the LSCB to drive forward improvement and the county council has invested an additional £541k to fund 16 new posts to support this plan.
- A Risk Sensible Operating Model has been introduced and the Lancashire Continuum of Need has been refreshed and realigned. Following the introduction of the Risk Sensible Operating Model within the local authority, the LSCB have developed a multi-agency framework to assist practitioners across all agencies in working in line with risk sensible principles.
- A strong focus continues on ensuring practitioners are effectively trained and the quality of practice is improved through:
 - the development of a Workforce Strategy and plan, overseen by the Workforce Strategy Board;
 - additional support for ASYEs and less experienced staff from Advanced Practitioners through 1-1 support, guidance and workshops;
 - our Social Work Academy has supported 56 practitioners to date, with positive feedback received;
 - the establishment of a Leadership Academy, launched in April 2018, which is set to provide a range of accredited and non-accredited development opportunities from May 2018 and the securing of funding to develop our Teaching Partnership will provide further support and development to social work students and qualified staff.

- During their first year in post, newly qualified social workers receive more frequent supervision, have a reduced caseload and regular reviews of progress leading to a final assessment.
- To support improved staff retention, Lancashire's Social Work Awards have been established to recognise innovation, skills and excellence in Children's Services.
- Children's Services will be supporting a grow your own scheme starting in September 2018 via the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship route, which will support existing employees to qualify as social workers.
- The use of agency social workers continues to reduce. Excluding full staff teams commissioned from external agencies, the use of agency social workers has fallen from 41 in March 2017 to 33.7 in March 2018.

SEND

- The main findings and areas for development following the OFSTED/CQC inspection of SEND services in November 2017 have been accepted and partnership action has been taken to respond to the twelve significant concerns that were identified. A formal Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was submitted to Ofsted on 17 April, setting out the collective response and agreed actions to secure long term change. A governance structure for the delivery of SEND services in the area has been agreed; with accountability to the Health and Wellbeing Board through an Executive Director for LCC and Accountable Officer on behalf of the six CCGs.
- The County Council and the CCGs have already invested resources to support the immediate improvement requirements; this includes recruiting a Joint Commissioner for Health pan-Lancashire, a SEND Improvement Partner and Programme Team and a SEND ICT Implementation Team. Additional funding has also been provided to recruit a Designated Clinical Officer, specialist teacher and to support the Lancashire Parent Carer Forum.
- A SEND Partnership Board is in place, with five thematic working groups established to implement the WSOA through more detailed action plans. The Board includes representation from parents/carers, young people and professionals from health, education and SEND services and action to ensure wider engagement is also taking place. Meetings have been held with education leaders from all sectors; an open feedback survey and an instant feedback option as part of the Local Offer have been provided, in addition to the Annual Survey for parents/carers/young people which has received over a thousand responses to date.
- The Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) conversions have all been completed, and a detailed audit of plans for vulnerable groups including CLA, Child in Need (CiN) and Child Protection (CP) cases undertaken. The outcomes from the audit are being used to ensure compliance, improve individual case planning and inform staff development requirements. Participation in regional audits and associated training opportunities is continuing. A NICE Compliant Diagnostic pathway for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has been agreed for Morecambe Bay CCG and all ASD pathways across Lancashire have been collated, supported by funding for a specialist teacher and post diagnostic course.
- Draft feedback from the first monitoring visit states that: *'significant progress has been made in establishing new frameworks and agreements between the relevant CCGs and the two unitary CCGs have been included in all discussions. There is now a clear line of sight both from Health Governance and Elected Members. The profile of SEND work across the Council has been significantly raised. Commitment from partners is recognised in the significant level of resources both have committed to the improvement process.'*

Partnerships

- There is a strong commitment and action to further improve the effectiveness of working with safeguarding partners. We are reviewing

strategic arrangements for partnership working and collaboration for early help; and the implementation of the MASH Service Development Plan focused on the quality of practice, overseen by the LSCB MASH Strategic Board. Improved support for children and young people with emotional wellbeing, including options for greater integrated commissioning, is being developed through the Integrated Care System (ICS).

- The Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board has agreed an overarching set of partnership priorities within a refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy (November 2018). This includes priorities under the overarching themes of Early Years, Activating Communities for Health and Wellbeing, Early Help and Managing Demand, and Wider Determinants of Health.
- In December 2018 the County Council agreed a vision for educational settings in Lancashire outlining how we will work closely with partners in health, education, governing bodies, parents and children and young people, to make sure that everyone can access a good education and is able to perform to the best of their abilities. The Vision sets out how, through working together with schools and other educational settings and with young people and their parents/carers, we can take ownership for crucial stages in a person's life.
- The LSCB has developed a strong online safeguarding offer for schools and through the "My Advice Project" is asking young people what they would like to see change about the online world.
- The LSCB worked with multi-agency partners to introduce the Welsh Model for undertaking Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs). A recent independent evaluation has found that in Lancashire the reports are more readable, practitioner focussed, less costly and more outcome focussed than the traditional method previously used.
- Action plans from SCRs are monitored by the LSCB and show timely completion of Children's Social care actions.
- The LSCB produces and widely circulates learning from SCRs and audits and these inform business priorities, for example as a result of a re-occurring theme in a number of SCRs, it was agreed that cannabis briefings would be held across Lancashire for multi-agency partners. These were extremely well attended with very positive feedback, reaching around 900 professionals.
- Via the LSCB there is collaboration with Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen to promote consistency of practice. For example, a single Continuum of Need is now in place pan-Lancashire and a single referral form is in development. Key strategies such as those for CSE and other complex safeguarding areas are the subject of pan-Lancashire Strategies and a common set of safeguarding policies and procedures are accessed online. Support in respect of on-line safeguarding is delivered via the LSCB on a pan-Lancashire basis. The three LSCBs are collaborating on scoping viable options for the future when new safeguarding partnership arrangements come into place.
- There are effective relationships with other partners that help to ensure avoidable delay in care proceedings is reduced and that children, young people and their families benefit from efficient and effective progress through legal proceedings. A Head of Service attends the Lancashire Family Justice Board. There are regular meetings between IROs and CAFCASS as well as between the Family Court Judge and the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services.
- Monthly multi-agency child sexual exploitation (MACSE) meetings are held to discuss high-risk cases and to ensure appropriate services offered and identified actions are met. Building on this, quarterly meetings with the police, children's social care and health are to be held to discuss operational issues and working practices in order to promote seamless, collaborative working to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- Internal processes relating to Significant Incident Notifications have been improved to facilitate better identification of trends and learning.

The Voice of our Children and Young People

- Participation groups are strong and impressive (LGA Peer Review, October 2017). Young People have a strong voice on the Corporate Parenting Board and are provided with opportunities to influence. For example, in March 2018 LINX presented an item "what would you do differently if you were in charge of Children's Services?" <http://council.lancashire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=178&MId=7518&Ver=4>.
- We continue to maintain good participation services through young carers' services, LINX (Children in Care Council) and POWER (SEND). Our services reached the finals in three categories of the prestigious Children and Young People Now Awards 2017. Youth Volunteering and Social Action Award, Young Carers Award and Children in Care Award.
- Children and young people have produced several films to support practitioners understand the lived experience of children in and on the edge of care. For example, through the LSCB multi-agency led project, children and young people from across Lancashire have produced a film about what safeguarding means to them. The group shared their experiences and what it means to be safe.
<http://www.lancshiresafeguarding.org.uk/what-is-safeguarding.aspx>

Areas of Development & Improvement:

Leadership

- Further work is required to embed and strengthen our new leadership structure, maximising the skills and capacity of interim leaders and continuing to develop a robust and stable environment as we move to permanence.
- Work will continue to support elected leaders, promoting mentoring opportunities and to participate in leadership development relating to Children's Services.

Partnerships

- Our partnership priorities for children and young people are being refreshed, taking account of the partnership priorities agreed through the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, to sharpen the focus on outcomes for children, young people and their families. We expect to have established a refreshed set of priorities, designed with partners, by September 2018.
- Our approach to corporate parenting is being strengthened to ensure that it actively challenges and engages partners to support children and young people. Our new Corporate Parenting Strategy, formed in partnership with young people in our care and our care leavers, has been drafted for consultation and sets out how Lancashire intends to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities in a way that puts children and young people at the centre of improvements in the planning, delivery and evaluation of our services.
- We have begun work to review our arrangements to support children, families and perpetrators of domestic abuse. Partners, through the Improvement Board, have recognised this as an area for development and improvement and are committed to work together to ensure that an appropriate and timely response is delivered.
- The referral and screening system for SCRs has been revised. Whilst volumes have reduced, they remain high.

Purposeful Practice

- Recruiting experienced staff continues to be an issue, as nationally. This will continue to be addressed via a recruitment drive, in collaboration with the Human Resources (HR) Service, through rolling adverts, 'selling' the job to potential candidates, planning recruitment campaigns and raising the profile of LCC through external events and social media. Retention of staff also requires continued focus. The development of our Social Work Progression Pathway and Health and Wellbeing Plan will support this, informed by our Organisational Health check that is currently out for completion.
- Whilst caseloads are lower than they were at the time of the last inspection, they remain higher than set caseload targets and there has been a slight increase over the last 12 months (although figures are still within the category of good). This will continue to be closely monitored and addressed.
- Continued work is required to develop the skills and knowledge of our workforce and embed a learning culture. Further work is required to ensure the support available to ASYEs is consistently applied, by providing additional capacity to Practice Managers and support from the Advanced Practitioners.
- More work is required to ensure decision making is robust. This will be addressed through the Leadership Academy training and workshops.
- Supervision figures need to improve to over 90%. A supervision policy has been refreshed and relaunched, including the use of reflective practice; this needs to be embedded to ensure greater consistency in frequency and quality of supervision.
- Work to understand the implications of the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 for practice with young people under 18 and develop policy, procedure and good practice guidance for social workers is ongoing. Links are established with Adult Services who have MCA coordinators and the NHS in relation to the aligning and interlinking of procedures. Within CwD, cases progress to the Court of Protection although there is drift in the timeliness of some applications being completed. Where applications have been made, practice and quality of documentation has been well received. Awareness training has been held for SEND and CwD staff; once procedures and guidance are developed, specific training for working with young people will be provided. Work will now progress with children's social care and residential services to consider the implications for young people within these services for whom the MCA may apply.
- The annual social care complaints report for 2016/17 highlighted a welcome decrease in complaints at the formal stages and an increase in complaints being resolved earlier in the process. However, a more consistent approach to analysing complaints and identifying trends is required to inform service development and change in practice.

The Voice of our Children and Young People

- Whilst the participation of children and young people continues to be strong, further work is required to ensure that involvement and views are sought from as a wide a cohort of children as possible.

APPENDIX 1

Ofsted Inspection Recommendations from 2015 - What does Lancashire County Council need to improve?

Recommendation	Current position	Progress
1. Ensure robust performance information is available to support effective management scrutiny and challenge to poor performance at all levels of the organisation	The quality, accuracy and timeliness of performance information is significantly improved and a clear structure is in place to enable management scrutiny (at all levels) and challenge with clear targets and thresholds in place.	
2. Review the way in which audit work is undertaken and evaluated to ensure it is used effectively to drive improvement in the quality of front-line social work practice	New audit model developed and fully embedded across children's social care. Feedback from audits is systematic and informs changes in practice. Further work is still required to fully embed the audit model across SEND and Fostering, Adoption, Residential and YOT Services.	
3. Ensure elected members have an accurate understanding of the quality of service provided to children to enable rigorous challenge to senior managers to make improvements	Elected members have made regular visits to the front line and receive monthly updates on performance information. Children's Scrutiny has been established and a line of sight framework has been implemented to ensure relevant information and intelligence is reported to elected members.	
4. Develop and implement a strategy that addresses the specific needs of the current workforce including the required levels of support and supervision for newly qualified staff	A Workforce Strategy has been agreed by the Improvement Board. Implementation is well underway and includes the development of an intensive induction programme for all new social workers through the Social Work Academy, issuing of new IT, risk sensible training, recruitment and retention, and manageable caseloads.	
5. Ensure that all child protection investigations are conducted by suitably skilled, knowledgeable and experienced social workers	Management capacity has been increased significantly, caseloads are manageable for all staff and within agreed thresholds. The move from generic to more specialist caseloads has enabled increasing levels of experience within teams	
6. Ensure that strategy discussions are held when the threshold is reached, are clearly recorded, and that they always include the police and health professionals in planning and considering the outcome of child protection investigations	Strategy discussions are routinely multi agency (and increasingly with schools' engagement), well recorded, within timescales and have clear management oversight. The LSCB conducted two audits – the first provided a base line and the second showed significant improvement in practice.	
7. Ensure that assessments and plans are informed by historical information and diversity factors and that they focus on the experience of the child and accurately assess risk	Significant progress has been made to improve the quality of assessments and ensure that plans are SMART and underpinned by the implementation of the Risk Sensible Operating Model. Work is ongoing to ensure that this improvement can be seen consistently across all cases and historical information and diversity factors are routinely considered, supported by the work of the Advanced Practitioners.	

<p>8. Provide all children in need with sufficient oversight from qualified social workers and managers to ensure robust care planning and on-going effective analysis of risk</p>	<p>Increased management capacity has significantly improved oversight, challenge and robust decision making. Child in Need cases that are considered complex (a clear definition is in place) are being held by social workers. All other Child in Need cases are held by either social workers or Family Support Workers with management oversight from social workers.</p>	
<p>9. Monitor and review the use of written agreements with parents to ensure they are not relied on to manage risk when a child in need plan, child protection plan or legal action is required instead. Ensure that managers' decisions recorded on cases files explain what evidence they have considered and on what basis their decision has been reached</p>	<p>Written agreements are no longer used widely and not as a safeguarding tool. The introduction of the Risk Sensible Operating Model along with improved and increased management oversight has ensured that where written agreements are in place these are appropriate and are used to firm up expectations for the family and to record decisions.</p>	
<p>10. In cases with an additional focus, such as forced marriage or honour-based violence, ensure that social workers understand the importance of also initiating child protection procedures when the victim is a child</p>	<p>Policy, procedures and practice standards have been reviewed and updated. Briefings have been issued through the LSCB and training material has been amended.</p>	
<p>11. Ensure that children who are privately fostered and their carers are assessed and visited within required timescales</p>	<p>There is now one social worker that holds all cases of children who are privately fostered, enabling a more focused approach and ability to effectively discharge statutory responsibilities in a timely manner. Work will continue to raise awareness of children who are privately fostered with the workforce.</p>	
<p>12. Ensure that the need for permanence for all looked after children is considered at an early stage and is regularly reviewed</p>	<p>All CLA have a care plan and care planning meetings occur regularly. IRO caseloads have reduced and they routinely undertake a mid-point check. All Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and connected carer assessments are undertaken by the Placement with Family and Friends Team. This has led to improved quality of assessments and consistent thresholds. It has also avoided duplication of assessments and provided an independent view.</p> <p>Further work is required to ensure that the need for permanence for all looked after children is consistently considered at an earlier stage and is regularly reviewed. Clear processes and policies are in place in relation to tracking and ratifying permanence but are not embedded into practice.</p>	
<p>13. Ensure that all looked after children have regularly updated personal education plans that are effective in supporting their educational progress and attainment throughout their childhood</p>	<p>At any one time most (90% and above) CLA have a PEP and the quality of these has significantly improved since the time of the last inspection (94.6% judged to be good or better in Spring 2018, compared to 63.5% in Autumn 2015). Educational attainment for primary age CLA is improving.</p>	

	Educational attainment of secondary age CLA continues to be an area for development.	
14. Ensure that the independent reviewing services undertakes consistent regular oversight of practice and care planning in children's cases in line with the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010	Capacity within the IRO Service has increased by 50%, caseloads are within agreed thresholds, reviews are on time, mid-point checks are undertaken and increased challenge and rigour is evident.	
15. Ensure that managers of the service maintain a strategic overview of the experience of children from the point they enter care to adoption or permanency that is sufficiently rigorous to prevent drift and delay and assist with identifying and predicting future placement needs	Single adoption service created, effective tracking system in place from the point of SHOPA to reduce drift and delay, permanence panels up and running, revised guidance and training developed. More work to embed processes, policies and practice is required to further reduce delay and ratify permanency arrangements.	
16. Ensure that all looked after children who need it receive timely life story work so they understand their history and what has happened in their lives	Timely life story work for adoption is delivered and there are systems in place to continually track and monitor this position. However further work is required to ensure that all CLA who do not have a plan for adoption receive timely life story work.	
17. Ensure that care leavers receive the level of support and information they require to successfully make a transition to independence, including accurate information about entitlements; effective support in engaging or re-engaging with education, employment or training; and that pathway plans effectively address the key needs of care leavers	Data and feedback is showing that the service received and outcomes for care leavers are improving but we know there is still work to do. Care leavers have been instrumental in informing the development of the Professional Advisor Hubs, which has built on engagement with the New Belongings project. Further work is required to ensure an effective care lever offer is in place, with continued strong input and co-production with care leavers.	