

Getting to Good Action Plan – January 2022

This action plan addresses the areas for improvement following the Ofsted ILACS of Milton Keynes CSC in October 2021. Progress of this action plan is to be reviewed on a monthly basis with key senior leaders; Mac Heath (Director of Children's Services), Melinda May (Group Head of Service Children and Families), Sophie Marshall (Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance), Candice Boatswain (Head of Family Support Services) this review work is supported by Phil Roberts (Safeguarding Improvement Officer). It is further proposed that Workstream C is overseen, monitored and scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Context and approach– January 2022

This action plan begins to consider the actions and areas for improvement needed following the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) of Milton Keynes in October 2021; outcome published December 2021.

The Inspection undertaken acknowledged progress across the service since the last similar inspection in 2016, but considered more needed to be done for a change of grading to be given. This Action plan is therefore a direct response to the report which graded Children's Services as 'Requires Improvement to be Good' across all domains. This Action Plan includes the eight points of improvement highlighted in the report, alongside addressing some areas that were not considered able to evidence the necessary success, some referenced within the body of the report and some through discussions with inspectors.

We consider that service improvement is a continuous journey and not a single event, therefore this first version of the proposed plan is for consideration at the MK Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee in February 2022 but likely to be subject to change. This plan is proposed to be a dynamic document that will be reviewed monthly by senior leaders within Children's Services with Action items RAG rated on progress. It is likely that additional items will be added to ensure findings from the investigative work that is taking place in the next three months so the full work plan can be adopted into service priorities for the 2022/23 financial year.

The work planned to fully inform this action plan includes:

January: A SESLIP (South East Sector Led Improvement Partnership) Triad Peer Challenge. This involves a full day with two other unitary Local Authorities Children's Services to give critical challenge and review each other's approach to service improvement. This includes the DCS and senior leaders from all three authorities to enable us to benchmark our position against others and receive challenge and recommendations on our improvement approach through the critique from other Children's Services leaders.

February: We are undertaking a 'Service Review week' on Children's Social Care in MK. This will involve senior officers in MK as well as external experts to fully consider the practice areas challenged by Ofsted and frame more detailed recommendations which will be taken forward within this action plan. We have engaged involvement of Rashida Baig, MBE, Director of Safeguarding and Social Work at Camden to support this work, alongside other experienced professionals in Corporate Parenting Improvement. They will support in framing the methodology of this review and the best way to carry out some of the auditing and interviewing processes to inform improvement. We consider the recommendations from this work will inform our evidence base in addressing the areas for improvement and of the direct actions needed.

We have also appointed some new postholders into some key positions who are planning to join us in the Spring 2022 and where possible will involve them in this review, but intend for recommendations to support their work plan on joining MK. This includes a new Virtual School Head teacher joining us at Easter, and a new experienced Fostering Team Manager joining the service in March. Our 16-25 Team Manager also only joined us the week prior to the Inspection so will also be able to contribute to this work.

March. We have an Engagement Meeting arranged with Ofsted to update on the progress against our recommendations and plan to submit a revised self-assessment to give assurance and evidence progress since our inspection. This meeting will include the new South East Regional Director and his senior Ofsted HMI team and our Children's Services Senior Leadership Team chaired by the DCS.

The outcomes from this work will also inform our 2022/23 service development planning across Children's' Services and confirm our priorities for the year ahead in order to put us in a strong position in regard to performance for the new financial year.

Key to RAG Rating

The RAG status should be interpreted as follows:

RAG Shading	Action Status
	Action not yet started.
	Action in progress and on schedule to complete on time as planned.
	Action in progress but at risk of not completing on time as planned.
	Action started, but blocked; key milestone not met, or other as yet unresolved impediment to completion.
	Action completed successfully.

Plan structure

Recommendations from the inspection report have been grouped in to three workstreams.

1. Strategic Leadership and Governance
2. Evidence Audit and Performance
3. Be a successful and ambitious corporate parent

Monitoring Meetings

Dates TBC

Workstream C: Be a successful and ambitious corporate parent

	Area for improvement	Actions	Owner(s)	Timescale	Progress / Outcome	RAG
C1	The support and management of children who are privately fostered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Private Fostering advertising and awareness raising • Review Fostering information pack (digital and paper) • Commission training on Private Fostering to ensure it is well understood • Agree lead manager to oversee PF 				
C2	The quality and frequency of supervision and support of foster carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Foster carer offer • Undertake Fostering Team Awayday to ensure standards of support, visiting patterns are understood and NMS clear • Audit compliance including feedback from carers 				

C3	The understanding and application of placement with parents regulations and permanence decision-making for these children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Placement with Parents arrangements to receive legal review • Audit all arrangements to ensure compliance • Review all permanency decision making • Commission training to ensure expectations are well understood 				
C4	The clarity and implementation of the care leavers offer from 18 to 25.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review our approach against Statutory Guidance 2018. • Formulate clear offer to 16-18, 18-25, etc. and agree through CPP • Publish agreed pledge • Ensure well understood by team and young people 				
C5	The number and availability of in-house foster carers have decreased in the past 18 months, as foster carers have resigned for several reasons, including COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress through Fostering Development plan and overseen by CPP • Includes: Recruitment and Retention events • Improved publicity and comms • Bespoke recruitment plan aligned with need 				

C6	Some children's records and documents are written directly to the child and these will benefit children in their later years when they wish to read their records, although this is not yet consistent practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow approach on child centred recording through the service • Audit for increased consistency • Provide Practice Guidance for practitioners 				
C7	Some foster carers are caring for children outside their approval status when decisions to place children are made, without recourse to the fostering panel or the agency decision-maker for a change of approval.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review across all carer arrangements to ensure compliance • ADM to reconsider any outside of approval status and if necessary, make return to Panel • Audit to take place to ensure future assurance 				
C8	Assessments of Foster Carers need to be completed in a timely manner. This includes annual reviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Performance tracker to be implemented to monitor assessments and annual reviews 				
C9	The work of the virtual school with young adults leaving care who are not in education, employment or training is not strong enough to promote their engagement effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On appointment of new VSH ensure working with Adult Learning • Initiate 'Transitions' Project Board with ASD to strengthen engagement across transition points 				

C10	Care leavers do not routinely gain access to their health histories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review with LAC Health Service and promote to care leavers through their Personal Advisors • Publish 'Health Offer' to Care leavers and audit uptake 				
C11	Some care leavers do access mentoring services that help them develop life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Grand Mentors scheme to consider widening offer 				
C12	Not all children have access to Life Story work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review capacity for Life story work and outstanding work • Consider access to this work and evidence when not appropriate 				
C13	Not all decisions on visiting frequency are sufficiently child-focused. Some social workers engage with children using age-appropriate direct work tools and activities, which enables children to explore their experiences. Other children do not experience direct work from social workers and the records of statutory visits do not convey a sense of meaningful engagement with children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake review of external approaches to record keeping and evidencing direct work. • Consider findings and adopt approach with training to strengthen evidence 				

C14	For some children, the information that is used to find a home for them does not always capture their needs and vulnerabilities well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review pen pictures of young people used for family finding and matching • Agree approach to updating information and ensuring all necessary information in place • Audit current compliance to practice guidance 				
C15	When children are moved in an emergency, the management oversight and rationale for these placement decisions are not routinely evident on the child's record.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of evidence of recent practice • Agree approach and policy, to include management oversight and reasons • Review interaction between CSD and CRT to ensure clear communication and good processes that are linked to good placement decisions 				
C16	Too many children on care orders placed with their parents do not have decisions about permanence made quickly enough or timely action taken when a decision to apply to revoke the order has been made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As C3 • Review timeliness of decision making on all cases • If threshold met return to court for revocation 				