

Trust Board	
Date of Meeting:	06 th June 2019
Report Title:	Chief Executive and Executive Team's Report

Agenda reference Number:	09/0619
Accountable Executive Director: (AED)	Paul Roberts – Joint Chief Executive
Presenter: (if not AED)	Not Applicable
Author(s):	Paul Roberts – Joint Chief Executive
Board action required:	Note
Previously considered by:	Not Applicable
Appendices:	A. Ofsted letter – May monitoring visit

Executive Summary

Recognising the Strategic Intent work and my role as both Chief Executive of Gloucestershire Care Services and 2gether this report reflects the breadth of my activity across both Trusts. I remain accountable separately for the performance in each of these roles.

The Report also provides an overview of Gloucestershire Care Services operational service activity.

Recommendations:

The Board is asked to:

1. **NOTE** the Report.

Related Trust Objectives	1,2,3,4,5
Risk Implications	No risks identified
Quality/Equality Impact Assessment Requirements/Implications (QEIA)	Implications are clearly referenced in the report
Financial Implications	No finance implications identified

Chief Executive's Report

1 Chief Executive Engagement

I remain committed to spending a significant proportion of my time visiting front-line services in both organisations and continue to be impressed and heartened by the professionalism and commitment of colleagues across the organisations and in the pride that they take in the delivery of, in many cases, outstanding services.

Inevitably given the current focus of the Executive teams on the development of the structure for the planned merged organisation my visits have been reduced, but I continue to make every effort to make time for this key activity which enables me to take the temperature through the organisation.

Services I have visited in recent weeks include:

Gloucestershire Care Services:

The North Cotswold Hospital and Minor Injury and Illness unit. - As always it was good to see the professionalism and caring of staff supporting service users.

The Dilke Hospital in the Forest of Dean – Recognising ongoing plans for the Forest, I was pleased to see how staff in the Forest Hospital already work so affectively across the sites.

2gether Services:

I have met with a number of locality managers to understand more fully how we are working already in a place based way and how that can be further developed.

Joint interaction

As the strategic intent progresses colleagues from both trusts are now regularly engaging together.

I have continued a range of meetings with other colleagues including:

Team Talk sessions – Edward Jenner Court and Rikenel – it is great to find that increasingly Team Talks contain a mix of colleagues from the two Trusts as many of our venues now contain staff from both Trusts, this happens naturally – an ongoing opportunity to build relationships to start improving what we do now. We took the opportunity to update colleagues on merger developments and to hear back from them how it feels on the ground – two way communication processes are at the heart of how we want to work.

Regular attendance at Medical Staffing Committee - these sessions enable me to understand the concerns and aspirations of this group, and to consider, jointly, future plans.

I continue to meet regularly with colleagues to progress our Better Care together Programme and was delighted to attend the first of stakeholder events which will

take place over the next 6 months. It was a very exciting agenda which set out what the merger process will enable us to take forward. Our Place - a sustainable future was a great session with sector leaders helping us to develop further our ambitions for the future.

I have also enjoyed taking part in a number of leadership/development events. I continue to be impressed by the strength of leadership at both Trusts and their clear passion for quality improvement with service users central to all we do. The Senior Leadership Network – a monthly two-way session which updates Senior Leaders on key issues and gains their input on how to move forward is an important element of this. The April session considered an update on the merger, a session by some of our Experts by Experience, and an update on values development.

2 Progress on the strategic intent to merge Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust (GCS) with 2gether NHS Foundation Trust

We are merging for a purpose. There is increasing evidence that communities and service users are best supported by better joined up services. We also want to address the inequalities people with learning disabilities and mental illnesses face in accessing good physical health care, and the challenges people with long-term physical health conditions face in accessing support for their mental health.

We are making rapid and encouraging progress and are now at a key stage in the process. We recently submitted our Full Business Case to NHS Improvement. We have also now selected the name we will use for our joint Trust, as long as our merger is approved.

We began consulting with stakeholders last year, when we shared a 'Name that Trust' survey with colleagues and governors. As you may be aware, NHS England sets out strict guidance on Trust names, so we then shared our preferred choices with NHS England and came up with three final options. We shared the names with colleagues, partners and stakeholders and asked the views of our Shadow Board. Our two Boards then selected a final name, informed by all of the views gathered, and the name was further discussed with 2gether's Council of Governors.

So, after all of the consultation and discussion, our chosen name is:

Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust

This is a name that is clear and understandable to everybody. It clarifies the geographical area we cover as well as what we want to do – which is to improve the health of our local communities and care for people when they need treatment and support. We also believe it will stand the test of time - we'll be doing "what it says on the tin" for many years to come! The selection of our name is an important step forward for us. It will be the first visible sign of an exciting start for us as we become one Trust later this year.

In order to give the services 2gether provides in Herefordshire a unique identity, relevant to communities and colleagues in that area, the Trust's Herefordshire services will be given their own name:

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Herefordshire Mental Health and Learning Disability Services

Our Herefordshire colleagues and teams remain an important and valued part of our Trust.

Our Communications Teams will be working with NHS England and our Boards to create our new Trust branding. We will not begin using our new name or logo until the merger is approved and work will be carried out to begin updating materials and systems when appropriate. We do not want this to be an expensive exercise, so we assure you that we will retain existing materials wherever we can.

We will start telling service users, patients, carers, suppliers and others that we are likely to be changing our name later in the year and what we will be called. It is important to keep the people we work with updated, to avoid any confusion.

This is a really exciting time for our Trusts. We are still on track to become one organisation from 1 October 2019 but that is not the end of the process. We know it will take many months, if not years, for us to fully transform services and provide the joined up mental and physical healthcare services our communities want and need. Colleagues within both Trusts continue to work tirelessly to deliver our usual, high quality services and support, and also to progress our merger.

3 Partnership Working

3.1 “One Gloucestershire” Integrated Care System (ICS)

An update from on the work of the ICS is a separate item on the agenda.

I continue to be engaged with both the development work in this area and the ongoing activity, including taking the leadership role on the Diagnostics Board and Quality Improvement.

As an ICS we are working to take forward our priorities for the year ahead, recognising that balancing individual statutory Board responsibilities and wider systems responsibilities is the subject of further development. As ICS CEOs I know we are committed to working together to serve our communities and ensure we make best use of the Gloucestershire pound. We meet together on a monthly basis as a minimum to consider how to take forward our plans. We had an interesting session on Admission Avoidance in April, which considered ways to work most effectively to ensure that individuals are effectively supported to minimise the need for admission to hospital. Reflecting on just over a year in Gloucestershire I recognise the significant changes there have been within the system to reflect our development from a Sustainability and Transformation Partnership to an ICS with greater sharing of our joint challenges.

3.2 Herefordshire Integrated Working Developments

With Colin Merker, Deputy Chief Executive, ²gether and Duncan Sutherland NED, ²gether we continue to be heavily engaged in working with colleagues in Herefordshire and Worcestershire to further develop partnership working.

3.3 Local Medical Council

These are a regular, valuable meeting which help to bring together key concerns across the county. At the April meeting we had discussed current issues and the wider national context.

3.4 The Redwell Centre and Glo Active

I was delighted to visit the Redwell Centre with Bren McInerney recently. Whilst there we met with Hayley Huntley, Glo-Active's founder and Director. I was really impressed by the service and the centre which has been part of the Matson community for more than 25 years. Hayley was running a programme for people with learning disability. The programme works with Gloucestershire County Council and 2gether and is highly recommended by participants and their families.

4. Chief Executive Development Network Event - May

I attended a very useful event which provided an opportunity to share best practice as the NHS adapts to the challenge of meeting the Long Term Plan. My experience is that there is much innovation and review going on throughout the sector and that harnessing the experience of others rather than reinventing the wheel will enable us to bring transformation to the way we work more rapidly.

5. Valuing Your Involvement'

A detailed update on this was discussed at the Shadow Board in May. The Shadow Board will further consider the outputs from this work and consider next steps for taking forward the merged organisations values within our policy and communication framework. I am pleased that so many colleagues, service users and governors have contributed to this process.

Living our values, building on those which have so effectively shaped GCS and 2gether, ensuring that both organisations are recognised as CQC "Good" organisations, will be at the core of how we operate.

6. New Complex Care at Home Service launched in the Forest of Dean

Following on from the early success of the Complex Care at Home Service in Cheltenham and Gloucester, the Integrated Locality Partnership in the Forest of Dean commissioned the Trust to set up a service in its locality, using the same model. The service commenced in April 2019.

It is being delivered in partnership with GPs and uses a proactive, preventative, enhanced community case management model, which aims to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and residential social care. This will identify and provide appropriate support to the cohort of adults with multiple long-term conditions, and/or frailty, who may also have complex social situations. It is a planned, proactive service, not an urgent care model responding to those in crisis.

Working closely with local GPs and a Gloucestershire Royal Hospital geriatrician, the service comprises community matrons (including a dementia matron), well-being coordinators, with physiotherapy, occupational therapy and dietetic input. The Trust

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also works in partnership with 2gether NHS Foundation Trust, Adult Social Care (GCC) and Forest of Dean District Council, as well as the community and voluntary sector.

Intended outcomes of the service include: people's health; the improvement of well-being and self-management of conditions; people being more effectively managed in the community; reduction and prevention of hospital admissions; reduction in the demand for primary care and in care home placements.

7. Location for a new Community Hospital in the Forest of Dean

Following both the Trust Board and Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group's decision to site the new community hospital in the Cinderford location, work has progressed in developing the Outline Business Case.

In April, the GCS Board considered the Outline Business Case around site options, ensuring recommendations approved previously at Strategic Business Case stage and Citizens' Jury were incorporated.

This phase of the process is 'commercial in confidence', as it involves land purchase and further work on planning permission. However, we can confirm that all sites considered are sufficient to accommodate a new hospital with adequate parking. The site chosen will not be publically declared until the Full Business Case is approved, which we are aiming to achieve later this year.

8. 2gether Wins Quality Improvement Award

An award has been presented to 2gether for our outstanding contribution to Quality Improvement in Mental Health.

The Trust has been part of the South of England Mental Health Collaborative for Quality Improvement and Patient Safety since its inception in 2011.

Work Trust colleagues have been involved in since that time includes initiatives surrounding End of Life Care, suicide reduction, learning from incidents, reducing harm from falls and physical health improvement, such as offering cervical screening to female inpatients.

The Collaborative has presented the Trust with the Outstanding Contribution to Quality Improvement in Mental Health in recognition of the Trust's long association with the Collaborative and the many pieces of work we have been involved in over the years.

9. Recovery College Launches Digital Manuals

The Severn and Wye Recovery College has launched two new digital manuals. The manuals were funded by the Health Foundation as a resource to be used both by the college and its students, and by other organisations and groups wishing to set up their own Recovery Colleges. The first manual – Journeys to Recovering – is to be used by students to guide them through the college's primary course. It was written by course leader Keith Coupland.

The second manual is a 'How to' guide, titled 'Implementing a Recovery College: One NHS Trust's Journey', with chapters authored by a range of people, including course tutors, peer support workers and 2gether colleagues. The manual was edited by Jo Denney and Anna Burhouse and the foreword was written by Julie Repper, Director of ImROC.

They are available on the [Recovery College website](#). A celebratory event took place at Charlton Lane Hospital, in Cheltenham, to officially launch the manuals.

The Recovery College is delivered by 2gether, in partnership with Adult Education in Gloucestershire, NHS Gloucestershire CCG and others.

10. Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal opens new state-of-the-art Cashes Green Ward, Stroud General Hospital

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal received a warm welcome when she arrived at Stroud General Hospital recently to perform the official opening of its newly-refurbished Cashes Green Ward.

The facility reopened in December last year, having undergone four months of extensive refurbishment. The ambitious renovation works saw the ward undergo a major upgrade, including the introduction of six side rooms (each with their own shower facilities), four bays, a day room and state-of-the-art facilities.

The six-figure renovation programme, led by colleagues from Stroud General and Cirencester hospitals, was made possible thanks to the generous support of Stroud Hospitals League of Friends, who donated £351,000 towards the works.

Her Royal Highness, who is Patron of Stroud Hospitals League of Friends, was greeted on arrival by hospital staff and a host of local dignitaries, including Mr Edward Gillespie OBE DL, Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, Deputy Lieutenant Mrs Sally Byng, High Sheriff Mr Charles Berkeley, Chairman of the county council, Cllr Andrew Gravells, and Chairman of Stroud District Council, Cllr Gary Powell.

Her Royal Highness was accompanied to Cashes Green Ward by Matron Juliette Richardson and Trustee of the Stroud Hospitals League of Friends, Dr Susie Weir. Here she was greeted by members of the nursing team and had the opportunity to view a display board charting the progress of the renovation programme.

The Princess then enjoyed a tour of the 22-bed ward, meeting and talking with patients, members of the nursing team, fundraisers and volunteers from the Stroud Hospitals League of Friends. The tour afforded Her Royal Highness the opportunity to visit the Princess Anne Day Surgery and Endoscopy Unit, as well as see first-hand the ward's new, state-of-the-art facilities and endoscopy equipment, paid for by funds raised by the Stroud Hospitals League of Friends.

After a short speech and a few words of welcome from Dr Susie Weir, Her Royal Highness was invited to unveil a plaque commemorating the royal visit, marking the official opening of the newly-refurbished unit.

11. Parenting podcasts go live

Episode one of the Healthy Family Series is now [online](#).

Let's Talk Pregnancy is the first podcast in the seven-part Healthy Family Series – a collaboration between Cheltenham Maman and One Gloucestershire.

Cheltenham Maman was founded by mum-of-three Kate Starkey in 2016. Fifteen thousand social media followers later, her website has become many parents' go-to place for parenting help and advice. One Gloucestershire is the partnership between the county's NHS and care organisations to help keep people healthy, support active communities and ensure high-quality, joined-up care when needed.

The monthly parenting podcasts feature local healthcare professionals, including midwives, health visitors and nursery nurses, talking about parenthood and offering advice to parents on how to be healthy themselves, as well as raise healthy children. Over the next few months these special episodes will take parents through key stages in parenthood, starting with the very first part of every parenting journey – pregnancy. Episode two, which airs in May 2019, features Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust Health Visitor and Lactation Lead, Emma Cronin-Preece.

Jo Ritter, Deputy Head of Children and Young People's Services at Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust, said: "The Public Health Nursing Team is delighted to support the development of this new digital technology. It provides an innovative, evidence-based information service for families, enabling them to access key health advice and guidance when they need it."

12. CARiAD Clinical Research Trial: Nurses' efforts commended

Dawn Allen, Professional Head of Community Nursing and Head of Tissue Viability Services, and Steven Holmes, Head of ICTs, would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Community Nurses involved in the CARiAD Clinical Research Trial.

Over the last year the nursing teams in Stroud and the Forest of Dean have been involved in a clinical research trial led by Dr Paul Perkins, Consultant in Palliative Medicine.

This has been a three-site randomised trial, and we have done very well as a site, with huge enthusiasm from all.

The trial sought to assess whether training carers to administer injection route rescue medications at end of life helps to enhance the experience of care. Now finished, the leads are digesting all this information, and we await their outcomes.

"Steven and I wanted to formally thank the brilliant work of our nurses in this trial and to Tracey King and Linda Piontek in leading this for their localities," said Dawn.

"It's been excellent to see community nursing engaged in critical national research. Well done all."

13. EU Exit

The Trusts continue to follow national guidance on this issue and respond to information requests from the Department of Health and Social Care and currently as Boards we are confident with the measures the Trusts are implementing.

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14. Event Celebrates 100 Years of Learning Disability Nursing

A special event took place at the Churchdown Centre to mark a century of learning disability nursing and look at its progression in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire.

Inspiration for the event came from the University of the West of England (UWE) which teamed up with the newly formed South West Learning Disabilities Nurse Forum to organise a week of celebrations. The milestone was marked at the Churchdown Centre with a bake-off competition, a display of uniforms and historic nursing booklets and information.

There are around 50 learning disability nurses working across the Trust. This includes student nurses who study at UWE.

15. E-Burn Pilot

Smoking is considered one of the main causes of ill health amongst the mental health population. In September 2018, 2gether initiated a pilot on Kingsholm ward at Wotton Lawn Hospital which ran for just under six weeks. Service users were given three, free E-burns - a non-rechargeable electronic cigarette - to support them to cut down, quit smoking and to help drive the smoke free agenda in the trust. The E-burns can be used indoors in the individual service user's bedrooms only and not in communal areas. Once they had used the three free, they were given information on where they could purchase further E-burns from. The E-burns cost £2.40 each with each E-burn the equivalent of 30-40 cigarettes. During this period there were 32 male service users, and of this total 78% were smokers. The pilot found that 89% of service users reduced the amount they smoked while on the pilot. The E-Burn initiative is now being rolled out across all 2gether inpatient units. It is hoped this will continue to support temporary abstinence from smoking for inpatients in hospital in line with NICE guidance, help service users reduce the urge to smoke, help maintain nicotine levels rather than service users going into withdrawal and ultimately improve physical health outcomes.

16. Operational Service Overview

Urgent and Emergency Care Summit: 14th May 2019

A system wide urgent and Emergency care summit was held on the 14th May 2019 with the purpose being

- Gaining a shared understanding of our current Urgent and Emergency Care system
- Developing a stronger system approach to reducing ED attendances and admissions, and enabling prompt, high quality discharges
- Agreeing the focus for the system moving forward on a systematic approach to pathway redesign

Key findings shared in the summit and in which community services may have a role in addressing are described below in three broad categories

Attendances:

Gloucestershire ranks second within our Dr Fosters peer group on A&E / MIU attendance per 1,000, which moves to fourth position when only A&E Attendances per 1,000 are compared to our peer group. The variance between the two suggests that MIU provision/attendances within Gloucestershire are comparatively high when compared to others in the peer group.

46.6% of Emergency Department attendances are Self Referrals, the largest proportion of activity.

16.4% of all Emergency attendances are potentially avoidable and this equates to 23,007 attendances in 2018/19.

Gloucester City has the highest rate per 1000 of avoidable attendances at 46, and South Cotswolds have the lowest at 14.

Mental Health attendances comprise approximately 4% of total Emergency department attendances when based on presenting complaint. This rises to 6.5% when you take into account patients who have contact with 2gether Foundation Trust within a year of their Emergency attendance (e.g. patients with a mental health condition that present with abdominal pain).

Attendances due to mental health conditions have increased 13% on last year, whereas total attendances have increased by 6.7%.

Urban Primary care networks rank the highest in terms of attendances per 1000 for frequent attenders or patients with mental health conditions. 18% of all frequent attender patients, and 10% of avoidable attendances are patients with mental health conditions.

The pattern of arrival for mental health patients varies from the general Emergency department, with arrivals peaking during the night time hours.

On average, patients presenting with a mental health condition wait 70 minutes longer in the department than a general Emergency department patient. Time in the department has increased for patients with mental health conditions from last year by 9 minutes, while it has reduced by 3 minutes for general Emergency department patients. As a result, the 4 hour performance for patients with mental health condition is generally far below general emergency department patients.

Further work by the system in understanding and providing alternative options outside the Emergency department for treatment for patients who are presenting as self-referrals

Targeted work required in Gloucester city locality in understanding the needs of patients presenting at the Emergency department and developing alternative pathways of care

Further work is required by the system in improving timely access for patients who present with mental health conditions in the emergency department, and in offering alternatives for accessing care in the community

Admissions:

The 18-64 age range has seen the highest growth of admissions at 18.5% (3,417), with 65+ growth at 6.5% (1,582). However, 65+ continue to represent the largest proportion of admissions at 46.3% (26,024), with 18-64s represent 39% (21,888). Bed days have decreased for patients 65+ of age, with an increase for patients under 65 years of age.

The 0-44 age range were the only groups to have a Standardised Admission Ratio (SAR) of above 100. SAR for over 65s is below both Peers and the National picture. Gloucester City has the highest volume of admissions and has seen the biggest growth when reviewing by locality.

The biggest growth was seen in short stays, particularly 0-1 day LOS (+25.9%). Long stayers (7+ days) were the only cohort to observe a decrease in LOS (-2.4%).

The system focus on community services preventing attendances and admissions into the acute hospital setting for the over 65 year olds seems to having a positive impact, but needs to continue due to the large volume of admissions this represents. Better understanding and services offer for those under 65 years of age is required. There are opportunities within place based working to understand the unique population needs and configure services for the Gloucester city population accordingly.

The change in pattern of length of stay is likely due to the introduction of an enhance observation assessment unit. The purpose of this unit is to provide enhanced diagnostics and consultant oversight for a short period to determine optimum treatment approach and avoid admissions for some patients. Alongside this new provision a focus has been on reducing the patients considered “stranded”, i.e. with a length of stay over 7 days to reduce delays in care and discharge. This work needs to continue across both the acute and community hospital settings

The Urgent and Emergency Care summit also received feedback from the Emergency Care Improvement system team (ECIST) from NHS England who have been invited in to do an external review of urgent care services and pathways across the system.

Of note was the need to improve patient pathways and care to reduce unnecessary delays and a particular need to focus on and develop a “Home First” approach to reduce the current over reliance on transfers to alternative bed based care settings.

The Accident and Emergency Delivery Board are reviewing the findings and discussion of the summit to refresh our urgent care improvement plan and support planning for the 2019/20 winter season.

Operational Service Development and Challenges

Timely Access to Services:

April performance notes strong operational performance in delivering caring, safe and effective care. Providing response services continue to be a challenge in a few areas, with 8 of the 34 access metrics noted as “red” or “amber”.

Although all areas continue to show strong performance against the national 18 week referral to treat indicator, the following 4 areas continue to persistently struggle to meet the local 8 week referral to treat target.

Adult speech and language therapy service:

As the Board will note, the performance against the 8 week Referral to Treat target for this service has worsened this month, which was due to redirection of capacity to cover the acute wards and focus on those with the longest waits.

The service continues to have an active recruitment campaign with some success and have secured agency cover to clear the backlog of patients waiting.

There is also discussion underway on the way forward to replace an essential piece of equipment to deliver the voice clinics which have had to be temporarily suspended and patients referred to ENT as an alternative. This has historically been a jointly provided service so there is discussion underway with Gloucestershire Hospitals Foundation NHS trust on sharing the cost. In the interim the service will be exploring options to rent the equipment to reinstate this element of the service.

Adult Musculoskeletal physiotherapy service:

As previously reported to the Quality and Performance board subcommittee an initial analysis of the demand vs capacity has demonstrated there is insufficient capacity to meet demand, even if fully staffed.

To address this gap the following actions are underway.

- A service transformation event is scheduled on the 18th June to challenge and check productivity and efficiency of the service.
- With the implementation of the new integrated MSK service, the commissioners shared the modelling they used to predict anticipated demand with the new care pathways and the subsequent resources provided to the Trust. A review of the actual vs forecasted demand will be done to determine if this is still aligned or whether further resources is required above demographic growth received.

- A portion of the demographic growth received this financial year will be used to increase staffing levels and improve overall performance.

Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy service provision in Integrated Community teams:

The services are finding detailing recovery trajectories challenging due to the dependencies of a number of factors which influence both change in demand as well as capacity. It has been agreed to convene a working group to devise a recovery forecasting model that will provide assurance to the Board on progress in improving access to services, this will be overseen by the Quality and Performance board subcommittee.

The focus for the service continues to be on the long waits, and a more detailed analysis demonstrating success with this approach will be shared with the next Quality and Performance board subcommittee.

Of note is that the Trust has now received a refreshed service specification from the Commissioners detailing the new service model for the Integrated Community teams, including the therapy elements. Discussion is underway on what would be appropriate key performance indicators to demonstrate that service users are receiving a responsive service based on clinical need.

Children's Services Update

Gloucestershire County Council (and Partners) recently experienced a OFSTED monitoring visit which took place on 30th April 2019. The outcomes of this have now been publicised and can be seen in Appendix A.

Areas covered by the visit included the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) where there is a daily presence of GCS safeguarding staff working on behalf of the wider NHS services across Gloucestershire and commissioned by the GCCG.

During the course of this OFSTED visit, inspectors reviewed the progress made in the areas of:

- ☐ the quality and timeliness of information gathering and decision-making within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) within the local authority
- ☐ the timeliness of social work visits to see children and ascertain their welfare
- ☐ the effectiveness of assessment, planning and interventions for children in need of help and protection
- ☐ the quality of management oversight, challenge and staff supervision in these services
- ☐ the accuracy and quality of the performance management information used by senior leaders and managers to oversee practice, and how effectively it is used to improve outcomes for children

There continues to be comments about the pace of change and consistence in

practise associated with the Children's Improvement plan and; whether further traction can be applied now that the County Council is experiencing an improving picture with regards to the recruitment and retention of social workers.

OFSTED have unusually agreed to a seventh OFSTED monitoring visit (they usually set a maximum ceiling of 6) for 6th & 7th August 2019. There are also plans being prepared for a potential full re-inspection that may take place Autumn - Early 2020.

Trust colleagues are actively working with the GCCG re: funding to secure additional resources into the MASH and as part of this are engaging in a rapid review that is due to report its findings during July - this review and what is perceived as a reduced level of resource has generated a number of partner organisation concerns which have been escalated to the Children's Improvement Board.

2gether NHSFT Internal Board Engagement

- 04.03.19 Members of the Executive Team attended an Executive Committee Meeting
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Programme Management Executive Workshop along with GCS colleagues
- The Deputy Chief Executive participated in Corporate Induction
- Members of the Executive Team attended the Programme Management Executive Meeting
- 05.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance attended a meeting regarding an additional S136 Suite and ECT Suite
- 06.03.19 The Director of Organisational Development chaired the Joint JNCC/JNCF Values Session meeting and the Deputy Chief Executive attended the meeting
- 07.03.19 The Medical Director attended an inquest briefing sessions with GCS Medics at Stroud Community Hospital.
- 08.03.19 The Medical Director attended the Mental Health Commissioning Meeting with the CCG.
- 11.03.19 The Executive Directors lead Team Talk sessions throughout the Trust
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting
- Members of the Executive Team attended an NHSI Oversight meeting with colleagues from GCS
- 12.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a Herefordshire drop in session for staff
- 13.03.19 Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Development session
- 14.03.19 Members of the Executive Team attended a Council of Governors meeting
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Board Meeting

- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Development Committee
- 15.03.19 The Medical Director attended a meeting with GCS colleagues regarding Care Home Pilot.
- 18.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Organisational Development participated in Corporate Induction
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting
- 19.03.19 Members of the Executive Team attended an Executive Committee meeting to approve the 19/20 plan
- The Director of Finance and Commerce attended the values session with joint facilities managers at Charlton Lane Hospital.
- 20.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a Dementia Case Management Pilot meeting
- The Director of Service Delivery attended the LD Quality and Performance Steering Group meeting in Tewkesbury
- The Medical Director sat on the interview panel for the post of GCS Clinical Director Sexual Health.
- The Director of Organisational Development attended ATOS Remuneration Committee.
- The Director of Organisational Development chaired the People Committee Meeting.
- 21.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive, Medical Director, Director of Quality and the Director of Engagement and Integration attended a Prevent Future Deaths meeting
- The Director of Service Delivery and Director of Quality attended the Service Integration Workshop
- 22.03.19 The Director of Quality chaired the QCR sub-committee meeting
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the QCR sub-Committee meeting
- 25.03.19 Members of the Executive Team attended an Executive Committee Meeting

Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting

The Deputy Chief Executive facilitated a Senior Team meeting in Herefordshire

26.03.19 Members of the Executive Team attended the Senior Leadership Forum

The Director of Service Delivery and the Director of Organisational Development attended The Trust Delivery Committee.

27.03.19 Members of the Executive Team attended the Trust Board meeting

29.03.19 The Medical Director attended a joint Mortality Review Group meeting.

01.04.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended Corporate Induction

Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting

Members of the Executive Team attended the Programme Management Executive Meeting

02.04.19 Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Board Development session

The Director of Finance and Commerce attended a values session with the West Locality Forum at Colliers Court.

03.04.19 Members of the Executive Team attended an Ad-hoc Board meeting

The Director of Service Delivery visited the Dilke Memorial Hospital in the Forest of Dean

The Medical Director sat on the interview panel for the post of GCS Clinical Director Dental Services.

The Director of Finance and Commerce attend the Trust Audit Committee meeting.

04.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Service Delivery attended a Dementia Steering Group

The Director of Finance and commerce attended the values session with the Community Hospitals Governance and Development team meeting at Lydney Hospital.

- 05.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a Herefordshire drop in session for staff
- The Director of Service Delivery participated in the recruitment of the Assistant Director of Service Continuity
- The Medical Director attended the Medical Staff Committee.
- 08.04.19 The Executive Directors lead Team Talk sessions throughout the Trust
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting
- 09.04.19 Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Board Meeting
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended a values session with the physiotherapy team at Cheltenham General Hospital
- 10.04.19 Members of the Executive Team held an emergency meeting regarding medical staffing
- The Director of Organisational Development chaired the Joint JNCF meeting and the Deputy Chief Executive attended the meeting
- The Director of Service Delivery visited the Lydney District Hospital
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended a values session at the Joint OT Leadership Forum at Charlton Lane
- The Director of Engagement and Integration and the Director of Finance and Commerce attended a values session at Stroud Hospital
- 11.04.19 The Medical Director visited GCS Community Dental Services at Southgate Moorings
- The Deputy Chief Executive attended a Values Session in Tewkesbury
- The Director of Service Delivery visited AHP leads in Quedgeley
- The Director of Service Delivery participated in their appraisal
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended a values session of the Tewkesbury Engagement event
- 12.04.19 The Medical Director met with GRHNHSFT Quality Improvement and Safety Director
- The Director of Service Delivery visited the Tewkesbury Hospital

The Director of Engagement and Integration chaired a QCR Sub-Committee meeting

The Director of Organisational Development attended a values session with the team at Charlton Lane Hospital.

15.04.19 Members of the Executive Team attended an Executive Committee Meeting

The Director of Organisational Development attend Corporate Induction.

Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting

Members of the Executive Committee attended the Programme Management Executive workshop

The Director of Finance and Commerce attended the values session with the ICS Team at Skillzone, Tuffley.

16.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive facilitated a Senior Team meeting in Herefordshire

The Director of Engagement and Integration attended a values session at the ICS Team Briefs

The Director of Organisational Development chaired the Safety, Health and Environment Committee meeting.

17.04.19 Members of the Executive Team attended a Joint Board and Governors meeting

The Director of Service Delivery attended the LD Quality and Performance Steering Group meeting

18.04.19 The Medical Director sat on the interview panel for the post of GCS Clinical Director SARC

The Director of Service Delivery visited the Dental and SARC facilities

23.04.19 Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting

24.04.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended the Delivery Committee

The Director of Finance and Commerce attended the values session with Entry Level Services team at Ambrose House.

- 25.04.19 Members of the Executive Team attended the Senior Leadership Forum
- 26.04.19 The Director of Service Delivery visited the North Cotswolds Hospital
- The Director of Quality Chaired the Governance Committee
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Governance Committee
- 29.04.19 Members of the Executive Team attended the Executive Committee meeting
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting
- The Director of Service Delivery attended the Open Performance Network Committee
- The Director of Service Delivery attended the Social Care Strategy Project meeting
- The Director of Engagement and Integration participated in the recruitment of an Occupational Therapy Consultant
- 30.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a Herefordshire drop in session for staff
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended a values session at the Stakeholder Committee in Herefordshire
- 01.05.19 Members of the Executive Team met to discuss an external Union communication received
- The Medical Director attended the Junior Doctors Forum
- 02.05.19 The Director of Quality attended a workshop to discuss the New and Assessment and Treatment unit.
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Trust Board meeting
- 03.05.19 The Medical Director and Deputy Chief Executive attended the Medical Staff Committee
- 07.05.19 Members of the Executive Team attended an Executive Committee meeting
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Team meeting

- 08.05.19 Members of the Executive Committee attended the Our Place – A Sustainable Future Event held in Gloucester
- The Director of Organisational Development chaired the Joint JNCF meeting.
- 10.05.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended the Stroud ICT Team Brief values sessions
- 13.05.19 Members of the Executive Team took part in the delivery of Team Talk
- The Director of Organisational Development attended Corporate Induction.
- Members of the Executive Team attended the Programme Management workshop and Executive
- 14.05.19 Members of the Shadow Executive Committee attended a Board to Board preparation session
- Members of the Executive Committee attended the Council of Governors meeting
- 15.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive met with the Countywide Psychologists in Herefordshire
- The Deputy Chief Executive facilitated a Senior Team meeting in Herefordshire
- The Director of Service Delivery attended the MH Legislation Scrutiny Committee
- The Director of Organisational Development chaired the People Committee meeting.
- 16.05.19 The Medical Director visited Lydney Hospital
- The Deputy Chief Executive met with a candidate for the recruitment of a Liaison Psychiatrists role
- The Director of Service Delivery visited the iHOT team
- 17.05.19 The Director of Quality chaired the QCR sub-committee
- The Deputy Chief Executive met with a Non-Executive Director
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the QCR Sub-Committee

- 20.05.19 The Members of the Shadow Executive team attended a Development Session held at the National Star College, Cheltenham
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Leading Council of Governors values session
- 21.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive met with Herefordshire Governors in Herefordshire
- The Director of Engagement and Integration and the Director of Finance and Commerce attended the Development Committee and New Highways meetings
- Members of the Executive Team attended a Shadow Executive Committee Meeting
- 22.05.19 The Members of the Shadow Executive Team attended a Board meeting
- The Director of Service Delivery attended the Delivery Committee meeting
- 23.05.19 The Director of Service Delivery visited the Fairford Hospital
- 24.05.19 The Medical Director, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Organisational Development held a meeting regarding Herefordshire Consultants
- The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Commerce attended the Audit Committee
- The Deputy Chief Executive met with a candidate for the recruitment of a Consultant role in Herefordshire
- The Director of Service Delivery attended the ACE Panel meeting held at Police HQ, Quedgeley
- 28.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive delivered Corporate Induction
- Members of the Executive Team attended an informal Shadow Executive Committee Meeting
- 30.05.19 Members of the Executive Committee attended a Senior Leadership Network meeting being held in Churchdown
- The Director of Organisational Development attended the ATOS Remuneration Committee meeting.

31.05.19 The Medical Director and the Deputy Chief Executive participated in the recruitment for three Herefordshire Consultant posts

Board Stakeholder Engagement

01.03.19 The Director of Service Delivery participated in the production of a short film with Kingfisher Treasure Seekers for the Annual Learning Disability event

The Director of Engagement and Integration met with a representative from Gloucestershire University

The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Countywide AHP ICS meeting at Oxstalls

05.03.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended a Mental Health & Wellbeing Partnership Board at Shire Hall

The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Herefordshire Adults and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in Herefordshire

The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Health and Wellbeing Board in Herefordshire

06.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a meeting with Cheltenham Borough Council

The Director of Service Delivery met with Gloucestershire Young Carers at their Gloucester office

The Director of Service Delivery attended an IRIS Project Board with colleagues from Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group

07.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Commerce attended the New Models of Care Board with colleagues from Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group

The Deputy Chief Executive attended the STP Provider Network meeting in Worcester

The Director of Quality met with the Trust's CQC Liaison Representatives.

08.03.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended a Mental Health Commissioning meeting with colleagues from Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group

- 11.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a One Herefordshire Health and Care meeting in Herefordshire
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended a Trust Annual Review with representatives from CRN West of England at Charlton Lane
- The Director of Organisational Development attended the Resources Steering Group with Gloucestershire CCG.
- 12.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the ICA Programme Board in Herefordshire
- The Deputy Chief Executive attended a Supported Living Accommodation meeting with members of Hereford CCG and provider SIL UK
- The Medical Director attended the NHSE Responsible Officer Conference
- The Director of Engagement and Integration met with the CEO of Swindon MiND in Cirencester
- The Director of Organisational Development and the Director of Finance and Commerce took part in a conference call to discuss contracts with Gloucestershire Hospitals Trust.
- 13.03.19 The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the CRN West of England Partnership Group meeting
- The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Recovery College Digital Manual Guide Launch event at Charlton Lane
- 18.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Finance attended a meeting with NHSI/NHSE colleagues regarding Operational Planning Review in Chippenham
- 19.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the Gloucester City Place Based Pilot Board with colleagues from the CCG
- The Deputy Chief Executive provided a presentation at the Quarterly GP Leads meeting being held in Cheltenham
- The Director of Service Delivery attended an EPRR meeting with Gloucestershire CCG colleagues
- The Medical Director attended the NHSE Regional Responsible Officer network

The Director of Engagement and Integration met with Chief Officer for Healthwatch Herefordshire

The Director of Finance and Commerce attended the Gloucestershire STP Operational Planning Review Meeting

20.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a High Intensity User Programme meeting with colleagues from the CCG

The Deputy Chief Executive attended a follow up CEO Contracts meeting with colleagues from the CCG

The Deputy Chief Executive attended a teleconference with Gloucestershire Police's ACC

The Director of Service Delivery, the Director of Finance and Commerce and the Director of Quality attended Contract Management Board with Herefordshire CCG

The Director of Engagement and Integration met with representatives from Treasure Seekers

21.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended Population Health Management Steering Group colleagues from the Gloucestershire CCG

21.03.19 The Director of Quality met with Annemarie Vicary from NHSI

25.03.19 The Director of Finance and Commerce attended a meeting with KPMG, the Trust's external auditors.

The Director of Finance and Commerce dialled into the EU EXIT STP meeting with colleagues from Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

28.03.19 The Director of Service Delivery, the Director of Finance and Commerce and the Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Swindon and Gloucestershire MiND Partnership meeting in Cirencester

29.03.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended the Treasure Seekers Annual Event

The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Recovery College Graduation at Gloucester Cathedral

01.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the ICA Leadership Summit being held in Herefordshire

03.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the Development of Locality Boards in Herefordshire

- 04.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the Medical Staffing Committee values session
- The Director of Organisational Development chaired the STP Workforce Steering Group meeting.
- 08.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the One Herefordshire Health and Care meeting in Herefordshire
- The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Commerce attended a Mental Health service meeting with colleagues from Herefordshire CCG
- 09.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the ICA Programme Board in Herefordshire
- The Director of Organisational Development chaired the ICS Social Partnership Forum.
- 10.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a STP Health Estates meeting with colleagues at Gloucestershire CCG
- The Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Service Delivery attended a Medically Fit MH Patient meeting at GRH with Gloucestershire CCG and GRH colleagues
- 12.04.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended the ACE Panel meeting held at Police HQ in Quedgeley
- The Director of Quality was part of the interview panel for the vacant pharmacy post as part of the 2gether medicines management contract.
- 15.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the One Herefordshire Health and Care Partnership meeting in Herefordshire
- 16.04.19 Members of the Executive Team met with the newly appointed COO of GHT
- 17.04.19 The Director of Organisational Development attended a meeting with NHS England to discuss the ICS Workforce Programme.
- 18.04.19 The Director of Quality attended the 2G CQRG meeting with Gloucester CCG.
- 23.04.19 The Director of Service Delivery met with the CEO of Swindon MiND
- 24.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a meeting with members of the Stroud District Council with a colleague from Gloucestershire CCG

The Deputy Chief Executive met with the Chief Executive of Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust in Worcester

The Director of Organisational Development and the Director of Finance and Commerce attended an Occupational Health meeting with Gloucestershire Hospitals Trust

The Director of Organisational Development chaired the Local Workforce Action Board

26.04.19 The Director of Service Delivery met with the Deputy Police Crime Commissioner

The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Countywide AHP ICS Council event

29.04.19 The Medical Director and Director of Organisational Development attended the Worcester Three Counties Medical School Partnership Group Meeting

The Director of Finance and Commerce attended the Resources Steering Group meeting with colleagues at Sanger House

The Director of Quality attended the Health and Social Care board in Bristol

30.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive met with the Managing Director of Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Director of Strategy and Transformation (Herefordshire CCG and One Herefordshire) and Joint Programme Director for Herefordshire and Worcestershire STP

The Deputy Chief Executive attended the ICS Board with Gloucestershire CCG colleagues

01.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attend the ICS Executive meeting with Gloucestershire CCG colleagues

The Director of Service Delivery attended the Trailblazer Programme Board with Gloucestershire CCG colleagues

02.05.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended the Place Based Development Programme Board with Gloucestershire CCG colleagues

07.05.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended the Cheltenham ILP meeting held in Cheltenham

- 09.05.19 The Medical Director, Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Service Delivery attended the Local Medical Committee
- The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Service Delivery attend a Senior GP's meeting with Gloucestershire CCG colleagues in Gloucester
- 10.05.19 The Director of Service Delivery participated in a EPRR teleconference
- 13.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the One Herefordshire Health and Care meeting in Herefordshire
- The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Commerce attended the LDR Executive Steering Committee with colleagues from the Gloucestershire CCG
- 14.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the ICA Programme Board in Herefordshire
- The Director of Finance and Commerce attend a meeting with KPMG, the Trust's external auditors
- 15.05.19 The Director of Finance and Commerce attended an all-day Resources Steering Group workshop
- 16.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the ICS CEO's meeting with Gloucestershire CCG colleagues
- The Director of Quality met with a colleague from NHSE and the family from the Montpellier Ward homicide
- 17.05.19 The Medical Director attended the Royal College of Psychiatry South West Bi-annual conference
- The Deputy Chief Executive participated in a STP Central Team teleconference
- The Director of Organisational Development chaired the STP Workforce Steering Group
- 20.05.19 The Director of Finance and Commerce attend the Resources Steering Group meeting with colleagues at Sanger House
- 21.05.19 The Medical Director attended the Cotswold ILP inaugural meeting
- The Deputy Chief Executive attended the STP Partnership Board meeting in Malvern

The Director of Service Delivery attended the Gloucester City Integrated Locality Partnership Board

The Director of Service Delivery met with representatives from Gray Healthcare

The Director of Quality attended the Gloucestershire Suicide Prevention Partnership Forum Workshop

22.05.19 The Director of Finance and commerce attend the Gloucestershire Contract Management Board meeting with colleagues from the CCG

23.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive met with the Head of NHSE Digital

The Deputy Chief Executive attended a contract meeting with Alzheimer's

The Director of Finance and Commerce attended the Shared Services Partnership Board meeting with colleagues from Gloucestershire Hospitals Trust

24.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive met with colleagues from Gloucestershire CCG regarding LDR

28.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended the ICS Board meeting with Gloucestershire CCG colleagues

29.05.19 The Deputy Chief Executive met with the Programme Support officer for LDR

30.05.19 The Director of Quality met with Annemarie Vicary from NHSI

National Engagement

06.03.19 The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the STP/ICS Leaders Event held in London

14.03.19 The Director of Service Delivery attended the NHS Providers Network meeting in London

15.03.19 The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the SW AHP Massive Event in Taunton

20.03.19 The Director of Quality chaired a Learning into Action Conference held in Manchester

26.03.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended an ICS Learning and Sharing event held in Birmingham

- 03.04.19 The Director of Organisational Development took part in the South West RSPF conference call
- 09.04.19 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a Development of Place Working Group in Birmingham
- 12.04.19 The Director of Engagement and Integration met with the Patient Handling Lead and Interim Professional Lead for AHP for Worcestershire Health and Care NHs Trust
- 24.04.19 The Director of Engagement and Integration attended a meeting with the CEO for the Royal College of OT's in London
- 24.04.19 The Director of Engagement and Integration attended the Royal College of OT's Fellowship Committee Engagement event in London
- 30.04.19 The Director of Organisational Development took part in the HR Directors network chairs conference call
- 14.05.19 The Director of Engagement and Integration attended a Link Directors Network Forum in Bristol
- The Director of Organisational Development chaired the South West HR Directors Network Meeting in Taunton
- 16.05.19 The Director of Finance and Commerce presented at the HFMA NED 'Introduction to Finance' network meeting
- 22.05.19 The Director of Engagement and Integration presented and attended the AHP Conference in Devon
- 24.05.19 The Director of Organisational Development took part in the West Midlands HR Directors conference call.

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 May 2019

Chris Spencer
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester
Gloucestershire
GL1 2TP

Dear Mr Spencer

Monitoring visit of Gloucestershire children's services

This letter summarises the findings of the monitoring visit to Gloucestershire children's services on 30 April 2019. The visit was the sixth monitoring visit since the local authority was judged inadequate in March 2017. The inspectors were Nicola Bennett, HMI, and Diane Partridge, HMI.

The local authority is making slow progress in improving services for its children and young people. The senior leadership team has a clear vision and coherent improvement plan to develop and deliver high-quality services to children and families in Gloucestershire, which it is successfully implementing. While there are early indicators of improvements in some areas of practice, there is considerable variability across teams. Overall, key areas that make a difference to children's lives, such as being seen quickly, being kept safe and developing trusting relationships with social workers, are not yet good enough.

Areas covered by the visit

During the course of this visit, inspectors reviewed the progress made in the areas of:

- the quality and timeliness of information gathering and decision-making within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) within the local authority
- the timeliness of social work visits to see children and ascertain their welfare
- the effectiveness of assessment, planning and interventions for children in need of help and protection
- the quality of management oversight, challenge and staff supervision in these services
- the accuracy and quality of the performance management information used by senior leaders and managers to oversee practice, and how effectively it is used to improve outcomes for children

- the quality assurance of social work practice through auditing of casework and the contribution it makes to practice improvement.

A range of evidence was considered during the visit, including electronic case records, supervision files and notes, observation of staff undertaking referral and assessment duties and other information provided by staff and managers. In addition, we spoke to a range of managers, social workers and other practitioners.

Overview

Despite a number of practice improvements in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), and although performance is improving, delays in decision-making remain for too many children where there are immediate safeguarding concerns.

The vast majority of children in need of help or protection are seen by their social workers on a regular basis. However, there continue to be delays in seeing children when they are first referred to the local authority, and, as a result, too many children remain in situations of unassessed risk for too long. Where risks to children escalate, or remain unchanged, these are not always recognised or responded to in a timely way.

In recent months, there has been an increase in the number of permanent members of staff within the local authority and a modest reduction in the number of vacant posts. However, too many children continue to experience frequent changes of social workers, and this impacts on the progression of their plans. Caseloads are manageable for the vast majority of social workers, who are positive about working for the local authority and the support they receive to improve children's circumstances.

The local authority has an established cycle of audit activity which identifies practice strengths and deficits in individual casework. Audits accurately evaluate children's experiences. However, recommendations from these audits are not consistently acted on, and the impact of audits on improving practice and children's circumstances is not yet evident.

Performance management information used by senior leaders and managers to understand and monitor children's experiences is of good quality and is comprehensive. The information provides a clear and accurate evaluation of performance, which demonstrates the effectiveness of services provided to children and families. Managers' oversight of practice and staff supervision is now more regular. Despite this, supervision does not consistently provide staff with sufficient challenge or direction to identify and address practice deficits.

Findings and evaluation of progress

The local authority has made progress in recruiting and retaining a permanent workforce, and while the numbers of vacancies and agency staff continue to be high, these have reduced by approximately 10% in the last six months. Senior leaders have made considerable efforts to reduce the turnover of staff. However, this is not yet having a demonstrable impact, and opportunities to embed and sustain the necessary improvements in practice are therefore reduced. Due to the high turnover in staff, over 70% of children have experienced a change of social worker in the last six months.

Since the last monitoring visit, the local authority has maintained or improved a number of key performance measures. The vast majority of assessments are completed within the maximum national timescales of 45 working days, and the number of children experiencing delays in allocation to a social worker remain low. Performance in relation to the timeliness and regularity of visits to children assessed to be in need of help or protection is generally strong, although there is considerable variation across teams. A significant concern remains that only just over half of children referred to children's services receive a timely visit to assess their circumstances and ascertain their welfare. Performance over time is not improving.

Performance in the MASH has improved. The MASH is suitably staffed by experienced social workers and professionals and this is contributing to improvements in timely information-sharing and planning. The majority of referrals to the MASH from professionals are timely and proportionate. However, a high percentage of referrals from the police conclude in no further action for children's social care. This results in considerable additional work for social care staff and delays in children receiving appropriate support that reflects their needs. The local authority is working with Gloucestershire Police to address this.

Within the MASH, thresholds are consistently applied, resulting in children receiving appropriate responses to their needs, and managers provide regular oversight and direction to social workers. Consent is appropriately sought from parents. Information from partner agencies is routinely gathered to inform assessment of risk and decision-making, which, in the majority of cases, is made within 24 hours. However, where risks to children are more acute, and therefore more urgent assessment is required, there continue to be delays in decision-making regarding the next course of action.

The vast majority of strategy discussions to consider risk to children and plan protective action now take place within the local authority timescale of five working days. There is good multi-agency attendance and effective information-sharing and risk assessment to inform decision-making. Increasingly, strategy meetings include timescales for completing actions. However, a high proportion of children are not seen with sufficient urgency as part of child protection enquiries. As a result, children continue to be left for too long in situations of unassessed risk. While this is an area of focus for the local authority, performance is not improving.

Social work practice within the assessment and safeguarding service varies in quality and consistency. Some practitioners plan and provide purposeful and effective social work practice which leads to improved outcomes for children. However, too many children continue to live in circumstances where unchanging or increasing risk is not recognised or responded to, or where their circumstances are not improving. This is due to changes of social worker, absence of clear planning and lack of management grip.

Most social workers spoken to are able to talk about the circumstances of the children with whom they work. This knowledge does not consistently translate into effective planning. Not all social workers give sufficient consideration to children's daily lived experiences. However, where regular, purposeful visiting and direct work is undertaken by social workers, children's circumstances improve.

The majority of assessments are completed within national maximum timescales and are more consistent in their consideration of risk and protective factors and historical information, as well as detailed analysis. Increasingly, assessments capture the views and experiences of children, although these are not consistently reflected in analysis of risk, need and service provision. Assessments are not always completed within timescales that reflect children's circumstances. They do not always include up-to-date information from agency professionals and do not yet consistently contribute to effective planning.

Plans are too variable in their quality, and actions do not consistently inform effective care planning and decision-making. Although an increasing number of plans include timescales, this is not widely embedded, particularly for children in need. The rationale for decision-making and interventions is not always consistently clear. It is difficult to measure whether an action has been achieved or has resulted in an improvement in children's circumstances. Although the quality of contingency planning is improving, these plans are not always implemented, and, as a result, are not effective.

Although the vast majority of children in need have a plan, review meetings are not happening consistently, leading to delays in addressing identified needs and improving children's circumstances. The timeliness of initial child protection conferences has deteriorated since the last monitoring visit. In March, just over half of initial conferences were held within 15 working days. While the majority of conferences are well attended by professionals, with clear analysis of risk and needs, the application of thresholds and identification of drift and delay by child protection chairs is not consistent. As a result of this, some children continue to live for too long in situations of neglect and abuse. Core group meetings are now much more regular, but do not always progress plans for children. Professionals do not consistently contribute to effective planning or escalate concerns to ensure timely improvements in children's circumstances. The views of children and young people are not routinely represented at child protection meetings and, where young people are not consistently engaged, the effectiveness of interventions is reduced.

Morale within teams is good. Social workers are positive about the support they receive from line managers and the visibility and responsiveness of senior leaders. Social workers particularly value the range of learning opportunities available to assist them in developing their skills. While supervision is now more regular, it is not sufficiently focused on identifying and addressing weakness in practice. Management oversight is not yet sufficiently rigorous or challenging to ensure that children's circumstances are improving within reasonable timescales.

Casework audits have improved in quality, and now accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in practice. While actions are identified to address practice deficits, they often lack sufficient urgency to progress. Social workers and managers are now regularly involved in casework auditing, which provides them with opportunities to reflect on practice. Increasingly, parents and children are invited to provide feedback regarding their experiences. Audit activity has, however, yet to demonstrate a consistently positive impact on practice and outcomes for children and young people.

The range of performance management information and reports available to the senior leadership team is comprehensive and provides a clear and accurate picture of performance across the service. Senior leaders have good oversight and understanding of practice strengths and deficits and effectively utilise performance information to inform service planning and developments. Implementation of the local authority improvement plan demonstrates recent impact on establishing a permanent, suitably qualified workforce and improved performance in a number of quantitative, as well as qualitative, performance measures.

I am copying this letter to the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector