

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 OCTOBER 2023

CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE INCLUDING INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES FINDINGS (ILACS), WORKFORCE AND SUFFICIENCY

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Summary

This report is in three sections and provides a summary of the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) which took place in July 2023, published on 11th September 2023, as well as information about two priority areas of work for the service: workforce and sufficiency.

The re-inspection followed a previous ILACS in July 2019, when the service was found to be inadequate. Since that time, the service has worked to improve under a Statutory Direction from DfE, requiring oversight of progress from an independently chaired Improvement Board. Ofsted have continued to monitor progress through quarterly Monitoring Visits.

The re-inspection in July 2023 has acknowledged progress made and graded the service as 'Good' overall. Following publication of the findings, the Minister has indicated that the Statutory Direction will be rescinded, but the service will continue to be inspected by Ofsted as part of their regular programme of inspection.

The Workforce section sets out the challenges for children's workforce and provides an update on the factors impacting recruitment and retention in Medway and across London and the South East region.

The Sufficiency section report recaps the ambitions of the Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2025 – 'A Place to Call Home' (see Appendix 2) which was developed during the

autumn of 2022 and approved by Cabinet and published in spring 2023, and reports on progress and risks to achieving the ambitions six months on from launch. The strategy details how Medway Council as the corporate parent will provide and commission the right care and support for children in our care (CiC) and care experienced young people that best meets their needs. Central to enabling this is that we can provide enough places that our children can call home, with the right love, care and support wrapped around them.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and recognise some of the challenges and barriers to delivery.
- 1.2 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note that improving workforce stability and increasing choice of homes for children in our care will significantly contribute to better outcomes for children and families in Medway.

2. Budget and policy framework.

- 2.1 This report supports the Council Strategy priority “Supporting Medway’s people to realise their potential” to achieve the outcome ‘Resilient Families’.
- 2.2 Since the inadequate rating, there has been significant investment in improving Children’s Services, with c£7million added to the gross budget for 2020/21, a further c£9million added for 2021/22, a further c£6million added for 2022/23 and a further c£10million added for 2023/24, with this growth acknowledged in the Ofsted ILACS findings. It is recognised that there is a continuing need for investment to support sustainable improvement.

3. ILACS

- 3.1 The Ofsted ILACS took place in Medway Children’s Services from 17 to 28 July 2023 and the report was published on the 11 September 2023.
- 3.2 Ofsted provide judgements against four discrete domains and then provide an overall judgement. The overall judgement for Medway was rated Good.
- 3.3 The four areas of service delivery were graded as follows:
 - The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: **Requires Improvement**
 - The experiences and progress of children in care: **Good**
 - The experiences and progress of care leavers: **Good**

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families:
Good

3.4 Key findings:

- Services for children and families in Medway have substantially improved since the inspection in 2019.
- Leaders have achieved significant progress, with a well-managed 'front door' and 'early help service', which ensures appropriate initial and timely responses to children's needs.
- Corporate and political leaders have addressed the systemic weaknesses and there is now a strong, determined and cohesive leadership team.
- There has been significant investment and commitment by leaders, and the new corporate and political leadership have given their ongoing commitment and support to the continual improvement journey of children's services.
- There have been improvements for children in care and care leavers, who now receive good care and support. There have been significant improvements in the quality and impact of the Corporate Parenting Board. The inspector noted that children matter in Medway.
- Variability remains in the quality and impact of social work practice, specifically in the longer-term support provided to adolescents, and those at risk of exploitation.
- There continues to be significant challenges regarding recruitment and retention of the workforce.

3.5 What Ofsted have said still need to improve:

- The quality and effectiveness of assessments, plans, interventions and responses for children who are at risk of exploitation and/or risk outside of the home.
- The quality and variety of direct work and life-story work available to children.
- The quality and consistency of assessments and planning to support disabled children.
- The quality and consistency of management oversight.

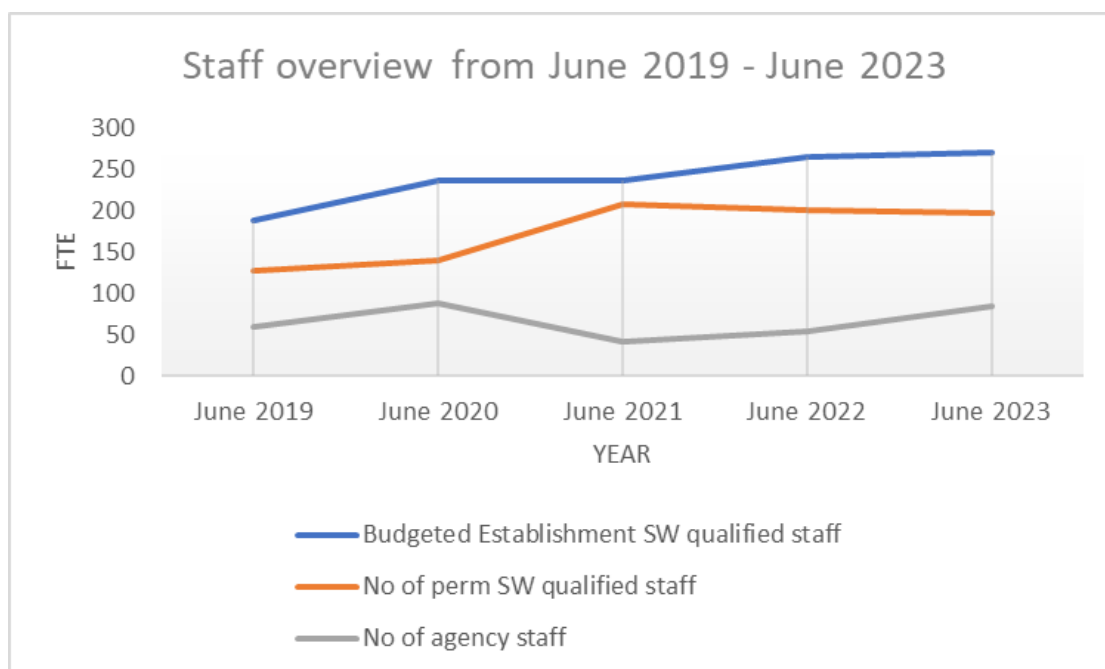
3.6 Next Steps

- Ofsted will return to Medway to do a focused visit in a year and will expect to see progress against their identified areas for improvement.
- The Council is proposing to relaunch the Partnership Improvement Board, chaired internally by the Director of People, as the mechanism for overseeing, supporting and challenging implementation of the improvement plan which will be developed by the service with statutory partners, and shared with Ofsted as required by mid December 2023.
- Children's Services will continue to embed improvements, and prioritise the areas identified by Ofsted. They will work closely with HR colleagues to build a stable workforce, which is essential to sustaining improvements and delivering a consistently high-quality service.
- A Test of Assurance will be undertaken in early 2024, supported by the LGA. This reviews senior management arrangements for managing children's and adult services and tests the extent to which the organisational structure provides effective leadership, meets statutory responsibilities and supports effective partnership working.

4. Workforce

- 4.1 Following the 2019 ILACS inspection, the Council has invested significantly in Children's Services, through increasing the establishment across the service and enabling a realignment of services. The establishment has increased from 186 social work posts in 2019 to 270 posts in 2023. The overall establishment for Children's Services is 589.14fte.
- 4.2 The Council also provided additional investment in the remuneration package for children's social workers in October 2022, through increasing the market allowance. The last increase in allowances was April 2018. This has enabled Medway's salary offer to remain competitive amongst other authorities.
- 4.3 Our biggest challenge remains the recruitment and retention of social workers, not only in a permanent capacity but also agency. This position is not unique to Medway as other local authorities both nationally and regionally are experiencing similar challenges.
- 4.4 Medway continues to have a specialist team within HR focusing on improving the recruitment and retention of social workers and practitioners and leading on different work streams to support the service.

4.5 The table below shows the staffing position over the period June 2019 to June 2023.



4.6 The turnover rate of permanent social work staff is currently at 16.9%, compared to 22.5% at the time of the inspection in 2019.

4.7 There are a total of 72 social work vacancies as at 30 June 2023.

4.8 The recruitment and retention of children's social workers remains a challenge. In 2022¹ the number of children's social workers directly employed by local authorities nationally decreased for the first time in 5 years by 2.7% (or 900 social workers), vacancies increased by 21% (to 7,900) and the use of agency staff increased by 13% (or 6,800). This is against a backdrop where the number of registered social workers with Social Work England (SWE) has increased over each of the last 3 years. Their most recent report identifies 100,654 registered Social Workers in England, of these 52.1% are registered to work with children and families (though not all are in local authority employment, as it includes charity and private sector workers).

4.9 Although the turnover figure has continued to reduce since 2019, retention remains an ongoing challenge. Since the 1 October 2022 a total of 32 permanent social workers have left with a further 19 resignations pending between July and September 2023.

¹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-s-social-work-workforce>

- 4.10 A total of 37 permanent social workers joined Medway during the period 1 October 2022 to 30 June 2023, with a further 19 due to start between July 2023 and September 2023, leading to an overall net gain of 5fte.
- 4.11 Exit interviews are offered for both permanent and agency social workers. Over the last year the main factors contributing to staff leaving include pay, career progression, workload, excessive hours and worklife/balance.
- 4.12 Stay interviews also take place with staff who choose to stay with Medway and are carried out by the Principal Social Worker either as one-to-one meetings or focus groups. Over the last year, key themes identified from staff about why they stay in Medway, include having supportive managers and teams, a good culture, feeling valued and supported, learning and development opportunities, as well as having visible, stable and approachable senior leaders. In contrast some of the areas where staff feel conditions could be improved includes unsupportive managers, bureaucratic processes, pay (particularly for non social work staff) and IT (Mosaic and surface pro laptops).
- 4.13 Although faced with national challenges of recruiting experienced social workers, Medway has responded creatively, building an extensive 'Grow Your Own Scheme' which is delivering successful outcomes, with extensive support package (PDS wrap around and 3-month locum backfill). Since 2020, 39 NQSWs have been recruited and 31 remain working in Medway. A further 11 have been offered posts to start in September 2023. This is to be supported through the creation of a social work apprenticeship scheme, which will commence in 2024.
- 4.14 As part of the workforce action plan several events have been planned for the year. These include an eastern European recruitment campaign in Romania in Autumn 2023 to reflect our local communities, quarterly temp to perm events to encourage our existing agency staff to convert to perm, an editorial in Community Care to share Medway's progress and Ofsted outcome and hosting an open day/evening to attract social workers to Medway.
- 4.15 Recruitment campaigns through Jobs Go Public and the Guardian continue to be undertaken on a rolling cycle. All vacancies are also shared with agencies as this provides a further opportunity to recruit permanent staff.
- 4.16 A new intake of 11 NQSWs will be joining Medway in September 2023 to undertake their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.
- 4.17 Medway has also been successful in appointing 4 students on the Step Up to Social Work programme (Cohort 8). This programme will commence in January 2024. The Step Up to Social Work programme is an intensive 14-month programme funded by the Department for Education. On completion, students who are successful in obtaining a postgraduate diploma in social work will be offered a place on the NQSW programme with Medway.

- 4.18 An investment in the social work apprenticeship scheme will see 4 apprenticeship places offered every other year in Children’s Services to help increase the NQSW intake.
- 4.19 Agency use across the South East region varies significantly from 38.5% to no agency. Across the sector agency staffing is viewed as a significant contributor to many of the challenges experienced by local authorities.
- 4.20 Whilst there has been an increase in the number of agency workers nationally more are opting to join project teams which has led to a significant decrease in supply of agency workers available to cover individual roles.
- 4.21 Due to the increasing demand experienced by Medway Children’s Services in October 2022, and the shortage of agency social workers to cover individual roles Medway created bank teams to cover unfilled posts and procured three project teams, almost doubling the locum capacity across the service to 84 posts in total as at the end of June 2023. The cost of these teams has created additional financial pressures as they are significantly more expensive (£52.50 per hour compared to the capped rate under the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC)² of £38.00 per hour).
- 4.22 A government consultation paper on ‘Child and Family Social Worker workforce³’ closed on 11 May 2023 and the results will be published in September 2023. It is anticipated that from Spring 2024 all Local Authorities will be required to comply with the national rules governing the use of agency workers. The rules will include –
- The introduction of national price caps on what local authorities may pay per hour for an agency social worker.
 - A requirement for social workers who graduated in or after April 2024 to demonstrate a minimum of five years post-qualified experience working within LA children’s social care and completion of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) in order to qualify for an agency appointment.
 - No longer using “managed service” / “project” teams for child and family social work.
 - A requirement for employers to request and provide references for all agency social worker candidates.
 - Not engaging agency workers for a period of three months after they have left a substantive role within the same region (excluding certain exceptions).
 - A requirement for a minimum of a six-week notice period for agency social

² https://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/SE_Moc_v9.pdf

³ [Child and Family Social Worker Workforce – government consultation.](#)

workers via a reciprocal arrangement between agency workers and LAs. To minimise immediate or quick departures and the associated impact on children and families and the wider workforce.

- The collection and sharing of core agency and pay data, to support better workforce planning and the ability to monitor, enforce and assess the impact of the proposals.

5. Sufficiency

5.1 There are 4 key themes of the strategy, listed below, with key areas of development identified against each one. Since the approval of the new sufficiency strategy in Spring 2023, several workstreams have been created by the council and its partners.

5.2 Theme 1 – Supporting Families

- New Multi-Faceted Framework in place with over 100 new approved services to support young people and families (Supported Accommodation, Floating Support, Therapeutic Services, Tuition).
- The Multi-Disciplinary Service has now been confirmed as part of the establishment, and additional staff have been recruited to intensively support young people on the edge of care as well additional capacity to undertake specialist assessments, Family Group Conferences and Family Network meetings. This has seen a rise in the volume and effectiveness of Family Group Conferencing. Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 the FGC service received 141 referrals for family group conferences and 97 were held relating to 178 children. The children's records were reviewed three months after a Family Group Conference had taken place and 63% of referrals had a positive outcome with either a step down to a lower level of intervention, the children no longer being in care or services no longer being involved.
- Innovative and alternative support programmes introduced including boxing and fitness sessions and support for young people to improve wellbeing and provide focused structured activities.
- Increased Family Solutions offer to provide better support for those families on the edge of care.

5.3 Theme 2 – A Place called Home

- Medway Council has agreed to develop some new internally run residential provision to reduce reliance on the commercial market and increase the local residential provision. The Council have been working with the National Children's Home Association to ensure these projects run smoothly and are

informed by the best national practice. The plans to develop the in-house residential offer continue and despite some delays in a very crowded marketplace, the Eden House Management Team have been appointed and start early autumn. Ofsted Registration is due to be submitted Nov 2023. Plans for our residential Learning Disabilities and Autism home (Aut Even) are progressing with an architect in place who is drawing up options, costs and plans for refurbishment of the property which needs significant work. The aim is to open in 2025, subject to the appropriate approval for inclusion in the capital programme.

- Our first Emergency Fostering Provision (Hazel House) launched in September 2022 and has enabled over 30 children to receive high quality support at short notice 24/7 365 days a year. This reduces the need for short term unregulated placements and has resulted in a number of children finding their long term “place called home” with the Hazel Project following assessment, enabling them to be placed locally rather than out of authority. The results have been excellent with very few incidents of significance for what can be some very complex and traumatised young people. A second provision (Anchor House) is due to be launched by end of Sept 2023.
- Relationships have been developed with external providers, aimed at increasing residential provision, including with Caritus Homes and Canterbury House to have exclusivity on Residential Placements and Homes.
- To address some of the short term sufficiency needs the Council are commissioning 28 day assessment fostering placements due to be in place by end of 23/24. This will enable safe family environments to better understand the needs of young people and to support transition to their forever home.
- Robust QA has been introduced over all placements including specialist 38 and 52 week school provision and a new tracker of unregulated placements has been embedded to ensure excellent oversight of standards of care for our children in care.
- The new internal fostering strategy and payment scheme has been live since April 2022, with the aim of attracting new foster carers to work with Medway. A permanent increase in the Fostering Service staffing establishment was implemented in 2021 to underpin the refreshed fostering ‘offer’ and to enable the development of a trauma-informed, therapeutic approach across the Fostering Service. Work has progressed including an uplift in fees and an enhanced training programme to strengthen support for all carers including connected carers. Despite an active recruitment

campaign, which has resulted in new applicants, a number of foster carers have resigned or retired resulting in a current net loss.

5.4 Theme 3 – Promoting Stability

- New processes and support from commissioning have been introduced to ensure more effective stability meetings with foster carers and to take a solution focussed approach to supporting families to maintain placements when young people's needs have increased or relationships with carers have become strained.
- Work is underway to develop a Short Breaks Strategy and to increase the sufficiency in this area for Medway. A bid to DFE was submitted in September to secure some external investment into key projects which would support the need for good quality varied and effective short breaks with the ambition of providing families with support and stability for children and young people with complex needs.
- A wide variety of supporting services (approved) are now available to support young people and families with skills such as positive behaviour support (PBS) and trauma informed workers, family support workers, workers who can provide personal care, Registered Mental Health Nurses, workers who are restraint trained and a variety of other skills. All are quality assured and can be used to support and stabilise at short notice.
- Closer working with colleagues from health and the police to provide support (and in some instances funding) to young people and families.
- New Family Contact Service Launched in June 2023 (run by Family Action) to ensure that family contacts are safe appropriate and proportionate.

5.5 Theme 4 – Moving Forward

- Significant development has gone into improving the offer for care leavers particularly around developing post 18 housing provision where the Council is working closely with other housing providers to ensure a significant increase in sufficiency of available housing for this cohort.
- New panels process means that young people who are 16+ are regularly reviewed and post 18 plans are planned well in advance.
- The Family Partnership Project (in partnership with health colleagues) was launched in April 2022 to support women who have lost care of several children through public law proceedings to support these parents to keep children in their care. So far, over 30 very vulnerable families have engaged actively with the project allowing them to access specialist services in a timely manner such as therapeutic counselling, advocacy, domestic abuse support and many other services. The project has already seen some

significant results in reduced levels of repeat pregnancies and young people being able to stay or return to their families.

5.6 Challenges

- There have been continuing challenges in meeting the placement needs of Medway's children. We have well over 400 children placed in the Medway area by other local authorities, primarily London Boroughs and Kent, which draws heavily on the availability of placements in the area. This presents considerable challenges to our sufficiency locally, leading to Medway having to place children at a distance due to a shortfall in resources. These shortfalls in sufficiency, combined with an increase in children with more complex needs, have left the council with no choice but to place a small cohort of young people in unregistered or unregulated settings. This is despite extensive and ongoing local and national searches to secure appropriate matches in registered settings.
- As of 30 August 2023, the Council had 16 young people who require care placed in unregulated provision, 4 of these children are under the age of 16 years and 12 young people are over 16 years of age with needs being assessed as 'care' needs, and as such should be placed in a registered setting. In all these children's cases the Council has routinely notified Ofsted at time of placement and provided updates as and when requested. Active work is underway to ensure these children are moved to suitable, well matched regulated provision as soon as possible. All of these young people are placed in Supported Accommodation Providers; none are resident in hotels or B&Bs.
- The number of children coming in to care when aged 10-15 years old, has increased over the last 2 years, up from 27% in 2021 to 34%. A notable proportion of children entering our care are adolescent males, with an increased amount of complex needs. Medway has recently joined the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and has started to receive UASC young people into our care, with 19 in placement currently and a further 3-4 expected each time there is an allocation.
- Recruitment into the residential provisions at Parklands and Eden House has been challenging given the market and has meant the anticipated timeline for Eden House has been put back and Parklands has had to run at below capacity for some of the year.
- Rising numbers of Medway children coming into care (and increased number or larger sibling groups) combined with the joining of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) in July 2023 is increasing the volumes of children

in care in Medway causing financial challenges but also challenges to local sufficiency.

5.7 Further work

- Work is underway with Supported Accommodation providers to encourage Ofsted registration now the new legislation is in place and registrations start from October 23. Medway have been co-presenting at national conferences with Ofsted to describe our approach of working with providers and how we are trying to address some of the challenges of the new regulations.
- Frameworks for key statutory functions such as ISWS and Drug and DNA testing are starting to be scoped providing more continuity and better value for money.
- Work continues to Improve commissioning arrangements for complex joint placements and arrangements that support these, i.e., short breaks/respite capacity and community-based support services.

5.8 The implementation of the sufficiency plan, alongside practice improvements and recommissioning services have had some positive impact, including the following:

- Significant increase in the amount of IFA placements made in the last 12 months. This has resulted in more children being placed within 20 miles of their home (66%) which is higher than the previous 2 years.
- Medway's move to the RAA, as part of the Adoption Partnership Southeast (APSE) in 2020, has delivered significant improvements for children. More children now benefit from permanence through adoption. In the last 12 months there have been 21 Adoption Orders granted for Medway children, and 16 Medway children have been placed for adoption. Since the launch of the RAA, 14 Medway children have been placed in an Early Permanence placement. 13 Medway children currently have a Placement Order and are not yet matched, 4 of whom are linked with prospective adopters, and family finding is taking place for 6 children.
- Strengthened panels including the introduction of specialist panels for 0-25 and direct payments and improved and streamlined processes means that children's cases are reviewed in a timely way by a group of senior multidisciplinary partners. including more rigorous tracking arrangements. This has led to better grip of placement planning for children and a better understanding of the needs of children in care in

Medway, and of the priorities identified through the analysis of need. This has led to a more targeted plan for getting a better relationship with the provider market, and improved collaboration with providers. The links with the Complex Health panel have also improved and this has seen an increase in the amount of multi-agency working and funding for young people.

- Concerted work has taken place to ensure improved oversight of children who are placed in unregistered provision, as this is not the provision we would want for the children in our care. Social workers, managers and commissioners now have better oversight of children living in these arrangements, and mitigations are put into place, including increased visiting, placement review and quality assurance activity, to try to ensure the quality and effectiveness of these arrangements.
- Work has been undertaken to develop more robust oversight of pre-birth planning for children to deliver early permanence. This includes improved tracking, better oversight of pre-birth assessment, and clearer processes for legal intervention. This remains work in progress; with more work needed to ensure that pre-proceedings are used proactively for all children where this is the right plan and to build greater confidence from the judiciary in our assessment and planning to prevent repeat assessment and intervention in later court proceedings.
- The creation of an additional manager post and work by the access to resources team to improve referral processes, including building a strengths-based approach, using signs of safety terminology, into children's referrals, has put the child's voice at the centre of matching, leading to increased success in matching children with providers. Provider and market feedback has been unanimously positive in this respect and joint training between providers and social workers is underway to better communicate information on both sides.
- Despite the September 2022 CPI being 10.7% and the significant increase in numbers of children in care and joining the NTS, Medway's costs for placements remain a challenge but in context are operating below a lot of its SE neighbours.

6. Options

6.1 This report is for information only.

7. Advice and analysis

- 7.1 There has been and continues to be significant work undertaken across children's services to make and sustain the necessary improvements so that children and families in Medway receive a good and improving service, and all statutory responsibilities are met.
- 7.2 Political and corporate leaders continue to support our improvement programme and have publicly expressed their commitment to children in Medway, particularly our children in care, supporting the Ofsted observation that children matter in Medway.
- 7.3 Recruitment to social work roles across Children's Services remains a priority despite the challenges regionally and nationally. It is anticipated that the changes proposed by the government will lead to greater stability across the workforce for children and families. Furthermore, this should eventually lead to reduced agency costs.
- 7.4 Political and corporate leaders continue to support future commissioning intentions and recognise this work is evidenced based, realistic and proportionate. It is acknowledged that the refreshed sufficiency strategy will require extensive work to fully embed the ambitious change programme in order to deliver improved sufficiency to support better outcomes for the children in our care.
- 7.5 The stable leadership team in the service and the committed practitioners will continue to focus on delivering a consistent and high quality service to benefit children and families in Medway.

8. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Practice improvements are not implemented in a timely manner, and do not achieve the anticipated impact	If the actions within the Improvement Plan and any other diagnostic activity are not implemented in a timely manner, then Medway's vulnerable children & young people may remain at risk or living in situations of harm.	Regular management oversight within the service, a focus on child centred practice and management oversight, and increased quality assurance activity provides assurance of individual children's safety. The Quality Assurance and Performance Board (QAPIB) as well as the Improvement Board will monitor progress and hold the service to account if progress is not made in a timely way.	CII

<p>Recruitment & retention</p>	<p>There are ongoing challenges relating to recruitment & retention of Social Workers, with a number of vacancies currently unfilled. The challenges also apply across residential and supported accommodation providers nationally, meaning that getting good quality qualified staff to support young people in care is increasingly challenging and costly</p>	<p>HR continues to actively pursue the recruitment strategy, supported by the service, with additional capacity funded by the DFE. A Workforce Development Strategy and action plan is in place and impact is regularly reviewed with quarterly reports to QAPIB and the Improvement Board.</p> <p>Work is underway with commissioning and HR to look at solutions and training options including participation in national campaigns around recruitment being led by organisations such as CHA</p>	<p>BII</p>
<p>Financial Implications</p>	<p>Improving Children's Services has had significant financial implications. The risk is that the authority cannot continue to maintain the necessary long-term investment in the service which supports sustainable improvement to Children's Social Care, and ensures all statutory duties are carried out. Increasing numbers of children in care and rising placement costs also create additional budget pressures for the authority.</p>	<p>The Local Authority and its partners will commit to support the sustainability of the improvement programme, whilst ensuring efficient use of resources and identifying opportunities to achieve savings and efficiency in service delivery. A number of initiatives are in place to support delivery of planned savings on the children's services budget.</p>	<p>BII</p>

Lack of Sufficiency in Foster Care Market	Influx of UASC young people being placed in Kent and Medway who are under 16 has seen a further lack of provision in the fostering market locally both for our existing young people but also for incoming UASC being cared for by Medway	Work closely with local providers to ensure we are an authority of choice and consider exclusivity with some good providers.	All
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For risk rating, please refer to the following table (please **retain** table in final report):

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

9. Consultation

- 9.1 Some children, young people and families in receipt of services, as well as statutory partners were consulted by Ofsted inspectors as part of the inspection. No consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report, but the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection will be published on the Ofsted website, so will be made available to the general public.
- 9.2 The sufficiency strategy was shared and consulted with professionals, families and young people prior to being published.

10 Climate change implications

- 10.1 The ambition to have more Medway Young people living closer to home and creating local sufficiency will positively impact the councils climate change ambitions. By reducing transport costs for social workers, for family contact and for professionals this could significantly reduce our corporate carbon footprint. For longer journeys professionals are encouraged where time and cost appropriate to use public transport.

11. Financial implications

- 11.1 Improving Children's Services has created additional budget pressures and additional funding has been made available to the service since 2020 through the budget build process and the improvement action plan. Since the inadequate rating, there has been significant investment in improving Children's Services, with c£7million added to the gross budget for 2020/21, a further c£9million added for 2021/22, a further c£6million added for 2022/23 and a further £10million added for 2023/24, with this growth acknowledged in the Ofsted ILACS findings. It is recognised that there is a continuing need for investment to support sustainable improvement. The additional funding was made available to substantially increase the staffing establishment for Children's Social Care as well as non-staffing budgets, such as budgets that relate to financial support for care leavers and provision of specialist assessments as examples. Grant funding from the Department for Education in 2022-23 and 2023-24 has supported additional Quality Assurance and HR capacity, as well as funding for some staffing within the multi-disciplinary service and additional capacity to support use of performance data.
- 11.2 There is a need for continued ongoing financial commitment, to demonstrate that the Council has the capacity to sustain the required improvements and avoid a repeat of the previous history of moving out of intervention, only to be judged inadequate at a subsequent inspection.
- 11.3 The service will continue to work with colleagues from across the Council to identify opportunities to use resources more effectively in order to deliver service improvement, including working closely with corporate finance colleagues to ensure accurate and robust forecasting.

12. Legal Implications

- 12.1 Children's services must continue to deliver all statutory responsibilities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ofsted ILACS report published 11.09.23
Appendix 2: Sufficiency Strategy – A Place to Call Home

Background papers

None.