

Children's Support & Safeguarding Strategy

High Standards for Children and Young People in North Somerset

January 2017 – January 2020



We are ambitious for all children, we will always strive for high standards to ensure we make a difference to improve the lives of children and young people in North Somerset



FOREWARD

I have great pleasure in introducing you to our Support and Safeguarding Strategy 'High Standards for Children and Young People in North Somerset'. I hope that it will give you a greater understanding of the work undertaken with our partners across North Somerset and demonstrates our determination to strive for and achieve high standards for our children and young people.

It outlines our vision for children and young people living in North Somerset, our ambitions for them and what this looks like in practice. It sets out our commitment to listen to the views of our service users and how we ensure their views are at the forefront of service development, our courage and imagination to innovate within a learning environment, the strength and purposefulness of our partnerships, the bold and sometimes difficult decisions we have taken, and how we recognise and respond when things are not good enough.

We have worked hard to embed a culture of continuous improvement, which enables us to always look critically at our day to day work and strive for higher standards. The key areas identified for further development over the next three years are also highlighted within this document.

I am proud of how we all work together, creatively and innovatively in North Somerset to ensure we make a positive difference in improving the lives of children and young people in North Somerset, regardless of our challenging and changing environment.

Sheila Smith



Sheila Smith
Director
People & Communities

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With many thanks to all colleagues who have contributed to our Support and Safeguarding Children and young people's strategy.

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1. Introduction

The Children and Young Peoples, Support and Safeguarding Strategy demonstrates to show how we will:

- improve the lived experience for our most vulnerable children, young people and families
- understand and plan for their current and future needs
- Co-ordinate a range of identified and effective activity and services with our partners.

The Children's Act 2008, defines sufficiency as:

'A whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, local authorities should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services with the aim of meeting the wide ranging needs of looked after children and young people within the local area'

This document aims to capture the range and scale of services available to meet our duty to provide sufficiency, but also seeks to plan for how we will identify and meet future needs for vulnerable children and young people in North Somerset.

This Strategy builds on the strategic direction set out in our previous Joint Commissioning strategies (2012 – 2015 and 2014 - 2017) and will outline the journey we have taken in North Somerset over the last few years. It has been updated to reflect the significant drive and commitment in place to improve our offer to children, young people and families in North Somerset.

This new Strategy also reflects our sharper focus on listening to the views of our children and young people who are looked after by us, who have provided us with a better shared understanding of what we do well and what we must do better. We will continue to ensure our improvements to service planning and delivery are driven by them.

Commissioning in North Somerset

“Commissioning is the process for deciding how to use the total resource available for children, young people and parents and carers in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way.”

Commissioning Support Programme

“Commissioning is the cycle of assessing the needs of people in an area, designing and then achieving appropriate outcomes. The service may be delivered by the public, private or civil society sectors.”

Modernising Commissioning Green Paper, 2011

In North Somerset we want to secure the best match between the desired outcomes and the available resources in consultation with the children, young people and families who use our services. We aim to keep the primary focus on the needs of children, young people and their families unclouded by the considerations of providers.

The commissioning cycle below provides a framework for deciding how best to deploy resources strategically in order to achieve objectives, making the best use of all strengths of all sectors in the market place.



- Understand:** recognise local needs, resources and priorities and agree end product, including provider information and service user views.
- Plan:** how to address needs effectively, efficiently, equitably and in a sustainable way.
- Do:** investment decisions to secure delivery of the desired service(s).
- Review:** monitor service delivery against expected outcomes and report how well it is doing against the plan.

2. North Somerset Council – Our Vision in Practice

2.1 We are ambitious for our children and young people

We want all of our children and young people in North Somerset to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. Although we recognise our areas of strength, there are particular issues pertinent to North Somerset which mean we have had to move further and faster than most authorities because the challenges we face have required it. We recognise that good practice and securing good outcomes for children, young people and families are not just about financial resources, but how well we use our available resource; being creative, innovative and by working closer with our partners.

2.2 Being true to our ambitions in this context has meant taking bold and sometimes difficult decisions.

- Following an evaluation of the national research focusing on outcomes achieved by traditional universal youth services, we made a decision to step back from direct provision of old style universal youth services and we pioneered a new model based on local commissioning networks and social enterprises;
- This helped us to prioritise investment in early years – where the evidence base is much stronger. Nationally a fifth of Children’s Centres have been closed or de-designated. Since 2010 not one centre has been closed or de-designated in North Somerset. In the most recent inspections, seven of our Children’s Centres have been graded by Ofsted as ‘Good’;
- In 2014, we brought back in house youth employment service (which had previously been delivered from an expensive third party provider) and designed a targeted service to better meet the needs of our most vulnerable young people. This has resulted in the lowest ‘not in education, employment or training’ (NEET) figures amongst our statistical neighbours, very low ‘not known’ figures and an increase in the number of care leavers who are participating in education, employment and training (December 2016).
- In 2014/2015 we entered into long term partnerships with Agilisys and Liberata to provide a range of services, such as payroll, ICT and Business Support. The aim is to bring in additional capacity and investment to North Somerset Council, as well as achieving efficiencies which enable front line services to be maintained and sustained.
- We proactively re-model our workforce, to ensure that such a valuable resource is directed to support families who are most in need, for example:
 - We set up targeted and specialist social work community family teams, who are co-located with family support workers and young people support workers, therefore integrating services providing a more robust and efficient service for children and families;
 - We brought together services for children and adults into a new People and Communities Directorate, streamlining management and support services to minimise reductions in front line services;
 - More recently, (April 2017) in line with national policy, ‘Education Excellence Everywhere’, and as a result of the Education Services Grant being withdrawn from local authorities, we have taken the opportunity to realign our Vulnerable Learners Service, our Prevention and Re-Engagement Service and our Virtual School into the Children’s Support and Safeguarding Branch. This will enable us to develop closer links and working arrangements between social work and

education colleagues and help to deliver a greater joined up and effective service to our young people and families.

2.3 Being ambitious means being determined to listen to the views of our service users and ensure that our services are developed with their views at the fore front.

- For the last two years we have been a key partner with Bristol University and Coram Voice on their 'Bright Spots Research study' to understand from children and young people who are looked after 'What makes a Good Care Journey'. This has enabled us to carry out, in partnership with our schools, a very high quality survey to find out what our children who are in our care (aged 4-18) feel about their wellbeing and the services they receive from us. A high response rate from our children and young people has enabled us to ensure that their views drive our improvement programme.

The feedback from this survey has been used to develop our 'Pledge' to children who are looked after by us.

For example, we have developed 'Document and Keepsake Boxes' which all children and young people receive when they first become looked after. These boxes contain a number of useful items which were carefully chosen by our Children in Care Council – Ambitious Voice. The idea behind the box and its contents is to help children understand their rights and entitlements as they begin their care journey.

- The role of the Children's Rights Officer is a prominent feature of our workforce and regular meetings between senior leaders and the Children's Rights Officer are held to ensure the views of our children looked after and our care leavers are reported directly to the Director.
- We have an active care leaver forum (Unite), children in care council (Ambitious Voice), an engagement programme for our children with complex needs and disabilities as well as a young people sub group that forms part of our local Safeguarding Board. This ensures formal channels are in place to hear and respond to children's voice at all levels of the council.
- The Leader of the Council and our Chief Executive Officer made a commitment to enable care leavers' views to drive change through our membership of the 'New Belongings programme'. New Belongings was led by the Care Leavers Foundation with the support of the Minister for Children, Edward Timpson. We are proud that through this project, North Somerset Council was the first local authority to formally support care leavers to pay their council tax. This has been recognised nationally as good practice and was quoted by Edward Timpson in 'Keep on Caring'.

In addition, as part of this commitment, our Care Leavers Forum took a paper to our Directorate Leadership team asking for changes and additions to their entitlements. These changes were all agreed and put together in a clear leaflet 'Entitlements – A guide for care leavers' as they requested. This was also recognised by the DfE as 'brilliant' and shown to David Cameron who was then Prime Minister for inclusion as a recommendation for all local authorities. This has become known as our 'Pledge' for our care leavers.

- We have seen an improvement in engagement and participation by children and young people in their reviews and conferences. 88% of children aged 8 or over participated in their initial conferences, an increase from 83% last year. It is felt this is due to a mixture of Championing and encouraging young people, including the redesign of leaflets and guides, using the language of 'Signs of Safety' as well as holding the reviews as a series of consultations rather than a single meeting.
- We have a newly formed Children with Complex needs and Disabilities Forum. This Participation Group facilitates communication and meetings with senior managers. The group has focussed on support for young people in schools, leisure activities and bullying so far.

2.4 Being ambitious also means having the courage and imagination to innovate, encouraging high standards of practice within an ongoing learning environment.

Within social work:

- We implemented the 'signs of safety' methodology to improve the quality and timeliness of decision making and to ensure our children and families are central to all interventions, with a solution focused model of working at the heart of all practice; Our principle remains that social work intervention is far more than a case coordinator role. Social Workers build strong relationships with children and families by spending time undertaking direct work and planned interventions.
- We promote research informed practice. As part of our CPD offer to our staff and our commitment to continuous improvement, we have invested in our membership of 'Research in Practice'.
- We are investing in a Social Work Training Academy known in North Somerset as the 'Pod model'. This is to address the nationally recognised issues with recruitment and retention of Social Workers and to help reduce our reliance on agency staff.
 - In 2016, we planned for staff turnover by over recruiting nine newly qualified Social Workers on top of those who were recruited to fill vacancies.
 - We recruited Consultant Social Workers who had ambition for developing themselves as aspiring Team Leaders as our Pod leaders.
 - Each Community Family Team Leader has a pod of newly qualified Social Workers and a clear support and training programme has been devised for both the aspiring Team Leaders and the newly qualified Social Workers in line with the ASYE programme. This is supported by the Principal Social Worker.
- We are developing an 'app' so that our Social Workers can easily access children's records on their iPads wherever they are, with the longer term aim that families will be the author and co-constructor of their child's case records.
- We also invest in an annual programme of Conferences (Think Family, celebrating social work in children and families and a joint international conference for adults and children's workforce in recognition of international social work day, and a conference for family support and family intervention workers).
- We were selected for and took part in the 'Proof of Concept' with the Department for Education on their social work accreditation programme and our Principal Social Worker has been selected to join the Social Worker Assessment and Accreditation Expert Panel.

Whilst this was ambitious it also demonstrated the commitment of our Social Workers and practice leaders. We were delighted with our results. As an organisation we have been able to learn from themes within the results and have targeted some areas for development.

- We have prioritised the development of services to children and young people with disabilities which enable personalisation. We will continue to drive forward changes that ensure our service delivery promotes the value of independence and creates better pathways to living independently.
- Current transformation plans will see the Vulnerable Learners Service merge with the Support and Safeguarding Branch, allowing close coordination of services for children and young people with disabilities.
- As set out in our Sufficiency Strategy we will continue to increase the number and quality of placements for all children but in particular for teenagers and young people with disabilities, and complex behaviours.
- Our children looked after progress group will have a continued focus on ensuring that we gain improved outcomes for our looked after children.
- We volunteered to assist the Department for Education in their social work reform work stream on permanence. They visited us in North Somerset to discuss and review best practice in this area.

Within Education:

- We have invested in the ongoing monitoring of school attendance for all of our Children whom we look after, so that we can immediately respond to any school absence.
- We have also invested in the redesign of our Personal Education Plan (PEP) process (February 2017) which is now held on an EPEP system. This will enable the Virtual School, Support & Safeguarding and Designated Teachers to work together to better support children's educational outcomes, as well as creating transparency and encouraging a culture of both support and challenge. This system will help us to more effectively track targets/actions/interventions as well as the use of Pupil Premium.
- We have updated our policy on the use of Pupil Premium.
- We have used the signs of safety methodology to train our colleagues in Education.
- Over the last 12 months we have made significant improvements to our Virtual School. The lines of accountability have been strengthened and the Virtual School head now reports to the following:
 - Three times per year to a Governance Board including Head Teacher representatives from Primary, Secondary and Special Schools and members of the Local Authority
 - To the Directorate Leadership Team throughout the year
 - To the Councillor with a focus on children looked after via weekly statistical reports and a monthly 121 meeting
 - Children's Champions Group (three times per year)
 - Performing Well Group

Within Health:

- Since October 2015 using the new Council responsibility for commissioning health visiting services to focus on more integrated systems of universal support for children

and families in the early years with regular liaison between Children's Centre and health visiting management staff.

- Additional investment to support children and young people's emotional wellbeing provided another mental health worker in the Youth Offending Service, a CAMHS participation worker, a set of emotional wellbeing themed books for all of our secondary schools and Weston College, enhanced our Eating Disorder support pathway and improved access and waiting times to Specialist CAMHS.

2.5 Being ambitious also means having the courage and imagination to work purposefully and creatively with our partners. For example:

To ensure families receive help when they need it:

- Embedding Early Help as 'everybody's business'. Our recording system ensures that information can be accessed and shared by all agency partners. This fits directly with what Research in Practice recommends as an effective way of delivering and sustaining Early Help when budgets are limited.
- In addition to this the Single Database went live on Friday 4th November 2016. This means that we have achieved a single database record for each child in EHM and LCS. Further development is underway to ensure all partners are able to use this effectively.
- A threshold document was put in place in 2012 to support agency partners when making referrals. Our Referral and Assessment team enable and assist partners to unpick and discuss their concerns so can have confidence to demonstrate the level of need or risk when utilising the threshold document. When partners need additional support they can utilise our offer of a "no names referral" to discuss their professional concerns.
- More recently our Learning and Development team have re-designed the range of multi-agency safeguarding training. Training has been updated to ensure we incorporate information and provide clear guidance on the identification of and impact of neglect indicators. The training also looks at the cumulative effect of neglect and emotional harm. The aim is to assist professionals to draw analysis so they can be confident about what information needs to be provided at the point of referral. The training also provides guidance when working with levels of need at 2A and 2B with a clear message of continuous vigilance and assessment of the need to step up when necessary.
- Partners have access to an Early Help Co-ordinator and are encouraged to use our escalation policy if they want to challenge thresholds in our Referral & Assessment team.
- A triage system is in place to support agencies to navigate Early Help and HIF cases. Our aim is to enable the early identification of vulnerability, identify improved pathways to support services, and at an earlier stage, reduce levels of risk across the whole continuum of need. Our current work is building on this and will be incorporated into a new One Front Door over the next 12 months. Longer term this will increase the number of families offered Early Help in North Somerset, by diverting those families that need earlier support appropriately into Early Help.
- A Data, Management Information Dashboard has been developed to provide a much clearer picture of Early Help in North Somerset and shows information on open episodes with an assessment, plan and Team Around the Family meeting, and those without. This gives us greater insight and helps us identify which agencies are engaged with Early Help and where it is successful and will help us to build on best practice and manage the performance of Early Help across North Somerset.
- A comprehensive programme of training is in place to ensure that individuals and agencies are equipped to effectively engage with Early Help Practice and use of the Early Help Module recording system. This is currently prioritising individual teams where Early Help is relevant.

- Developing an 'edge of care service' to be funded by social investment. This will go live in Spring 2017.
- An active multi-agency Think Family Strategy Group which meets quarterly to improve working across organisations and embed the Think Family approach. The North Somerset Multi-Agency Think Family guidance has been updated (January 2017) and references our recent serious case review. A regular training programme to promote the use of this approach and its supporting Guidance is in place and a quarterly Think Family newsletter keeps the approach 'visible' to practitioners and focuses on a different Think Family theme each time eg Young Carers, Domestic Abuse, Mental Health etc.
- We have commissioned a Young Carer support service, delivered by Alliance Living, which has successfully obtained significant charitable funding. This has been extended to include Young Adult Carers up to 25 years of age to better support key transitions such as university, work and moving into independence. This service supports 500 young and young adult carers. It works in partnership with other agencies as part of the multi-agency Think Family Strategy Group, and is actively linked to our Early Help system. It works with other agencies to meet the aim of identifying all young carers in our area. It provides statutory Young Carer Assessments on behalf of the council. The service has significantly developed to increase capacity, increase support and reduce waiting time for support. This includes: New Horizons Programme, Schools Work, Group Support, One-to-One Support, Counselling, Summer Workshop Programme, Trips, Residential Weekends, Young Adult Carer Programme, Newsletter and Online/Text/Phone Support. The service has a Schools' Coordinator who is actively working with schools across North Somerset to raise awareness and provide training, assemblies, resources and direct support for young carers and schools. We now have nominated Young Carers Leads in all Secondary Schools and approximately 50% of Primary Schools
- Building on the success of Junction 21 Mentoring Service, since October 2015, the Service has been expanded to incorporate Independent Visiting and Advocacy.
- Since April 2014, the Youth Offending Service has established and delivered the Young Victim Service across Avon and Somerset as commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Several colleagues from across a range of agencies including social care workers have been trained to deliver IAPT (Access to Psychological Therapies) through Exeter University.
- An extensive range of evidenced based parenting groups for children of different age groups and needs is offered

With our younger children

- North Somerset has always invested highly in its Early Years through close working relationships with the private, voluntary and independent sectors. This has enabled a robust support and challenge programme to be embedded across the sectors.

We share a vision of "learning without limits" where all children are seen as competent, capable, intelligent individuals regardless of their need. We have high expectations for outcomes of all children in early years. Our Early Years and Child Care Team have excellent relationships with multi-agency partners including schools, portage, education psychology, health visitors, opportunity groups, speech and language, physiotherapy, community paediatricians and children's centres to support all children through their transitions into school

Outcomes for children at the end of Early Years Foundation stage are higher than National and particularly strong for communication and language. The inequality gap is narrow and at 2015-2016 North Somerset were placed 5th nationally.

Take up for 2 year old funded children is high at over 80% against the national picture of 60%.

In Education

- It is particularly encouraging that every school in the most disadvantaged wards in Weston-super-Mare is now rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding', and that Weston College, which provides all post 16 education in Weston-super-Mare, is also rated as Outstanding by Ofsted. A key factor has been the strength of our partnership with schools and the Strategic Schools Forum. We are currently establishing a new model for working with our schools in line with National policy, Education Excellence Everywhere

Our redesigned 'Out Of School panel' has been recognised as an effective multi agency group with the remit of supporting schools with students exhibiting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, both at the point of fixed term exclusion through to those who have been permanently excluded. This has resulted in a greater understanding by schools and other agencies of the potential difficulties in placing young people who are experiencing problems in school. A consequence has been that the school community is now sharing greater responsibility for working with the Local Authority in placing young people and this has resulted in the number of young people without a school place being reduced.

In order to further support the appropriate provision of educational placements for the young people who are potentially without a school place or who need bespoke provision the Strategic Schools Forum has, for the first time, allocated a budget for the out of school panel.

During the last academic year, the Local Authority has explored a number of creative options to support students who experience social emotional and behavioural difficulties. This has included developments in the Voyage Learning Campus and the piloting of two facilities, one as a form of early intervention, the other as a means of returning some students currently in out of area placements back into North Somerset. These provisions have met with mixed results and are currently under review and will form part of the wider alternative provision review

Partnership working with schools, the Voyage Learning Campus and the Local Authority has resulted in an agreement to begin an alternative provision review commencing in April 2017. This acknowledges that whilst we have developed good practices, we recognise that currently there are some gaps in provision due to the increasing demands of our young people and we are seeking to address these needs in a proactive way.

Our work with our local Universities

- We have been key partners with our local universities on very important research for example
 - The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: linking Care and Education data (Prof David Berridge Bristol University and Rees centre)
 - Bright Spots 'What makes a Good Care Journey?' (Prof Julie Selwyn Bristol University and Coram Voice)
 - The Impact of Pupil Premium - Prof Tess Ridge, Bath University
 - Partnering with local universities on research projects about adoption, child poverty, young people's wellbeing and child Mental Health, developing a framework for assessing parental capacity to change and ongoing social work training.
 - The NASAC research project at the University of Bristol looking at increasing physical activity and healthy eating in nursery settings as an investment in long-term health and wellbeing.
- North Somerset have secured a second bid to be part of the Step Up programme in this region.
- Our Principal Social Worker links with Universities for the facilitation of high quality training.

In Health:

- The Children's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Partnership have supported the development of a Community Interest Company that provides children and young people and parent carer led themed SEND workshops for other children and parent carers.

Our Care Leavers

- We are key partners in the National ASDAN pilot and accreditation programme and it is intended that this will be rolled out appropriately for our children looked after and care leavers in North Somerset.
- We are a key partner on the Care Leavers National Benchmarking Forum and sit on the Strategic Board, our young people also regularly attend Benchmarking Forum events with our support.
- The North Somerset Partnership Board (including our Leader, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Executives of partner agencies) has prioritised employment opportunities for care leavers in North Somerset.

2.6 Being ambitious also means being honest enough to recognise when things are not good enough.

- In 2014 we undertook a fundamental review of our services for our children whose plan for permanence is to remain parented by us and our foster carers. Even though our last Ofsted inspection had rated our services for looked after children and care leavers 'good' we recognised that we still wanted and needed to improve. A comprehensive plan to improve our performance was put in place.

This was supported by a financial commitment to move our 'Resource Service' into the Town Hall. The facility, which was opened in November 2015, was designed by our

young people, is bright, airy and welcoming and has a modern, fully equipped lounge, kitchen and dining area with facilities for child care. It also has dedicated computer/internet/Wi-Fi facilities and convenient access to both on-site and visiting service support staff (covering Education, Health, Housing, etc).

Of course change has not just been in Children's Services. The Council has delivered £55million of savings since 2010 whilst maintaining public satisfaction with services. Office accommodation has been modernised and rationalised. There is an ambitious and ongoing transformation programme in place. We have brought together disparate teams into a single 'One Council' business intelligence team. The changes are fast paced and currently our learning and development teams are being reorganised in line with the national changes to school funding.

We are working hard to promote economic growth and employment in the area, with a series of major projects, many funded through our West of England Local Economic Partnership, such as the Junction 21 Enterprise area, re-opening the railway line to Portishead to passengers and regenerating Weston-super-Mare town centre. A key ambition of the Council is that our most vulnerable families benefit from this investment.

Education and skills are absolutely central to our vision. All the primary schools in the most disadvantaged areas of Weston-super-Mare are now good or outstanding and we have extended choice in secondary education with the opening of the North Somerset Enterprise Technology College - a 14-19 Academy with a focus on science, technology, engineering and maths and a strong business ethos. We are working with the College to make Weston a University town and are transferring the historic Winter Gardens to the College as the centrepiece of this development, which will raise aspirations and widen opportunities for our young people.

With this scale and pace of change things do not always go smoothly. There are snags and disruption. Change is not easy for staff at the sharp end. However we will continue to innovate and strive for efficiencies, working more closely with our partners than ever, because unless we do that, we will not deliver our ambitions for children and we will not allow that to happen.

Being ambitious for children means never giving up. Outlined below are key areas for our development over the next three years.

3. A Culture of Continuous Improvement: High Standards for Children and families

We are determined to offer a consistently high standard of service delivery. We have developed a structure which focuses on ongoing improvement, at all levels of the organisation (Appendix 2). This allows us to identify areas of strength, areas for development and prioritise where improvement is required. Our shared clear vision and the structure, which has been embedded into practice, is enabling us to consistently make improvements on a day to day basis.

This approach was developed in response to a previous self-assessment which showed that although we had several areas of very strong practice, we could not confidently say this was always delivered consistently.

Our Improvement planning is mindful of national expectations and legislation including:

- Children Act 2014

- Working Together 2015
- Social Work Reform in Children and Families
- “Keep on Caring” July 2016
- SEND reforms
- Education reforms
- Troubled Families Programme
- Ofsted Handbook and Framework
- Human Rights Act
- Social Work Act 2017

3.1 North Somerset Key Strategies and Documents

This document aims to capture the range and scale of services available for children young people and families. Several of our strategies have been updated recently to reflect our high standards for service delivery and our priorities for improvement. (These are listed below) They can all be found in the Support and Safeguarding Library:

- Neglect Strategy 2017 – 2019
- Early Help Strategy 2014 - 2017
- Long Term Planning and Permanence strategy 2016
- Missing 2016 - 2017
- Sexual Exploitation 2016 - 2017
- Fostering and Placement (Sufficiency) strategy 2017
- Emotional Health and mental wellbeing strategy 2017
- Children and Families Partnership plan 2016 – 2019
- Domestic Abuse 2017
- Female Genital Mutilation (February 2017)
- Special Guardianship (currently being updated April 2017)
- Corporate Parenting Strategy (currently in draft form, April 2017)
- Family and Friends - Kinship (currently being updated April 2017)
- Staying Put Policy 2015 – 2016 (currently being updated)
- Pathways out of Poverty 2011 – 2015 (current)
- Allegations Policy 2017 including information on the Designated Officer for Allegations
- ‘Holly’ Serious Case Review July 2016 and Action Plan
- Workforce Strategy – to be updated within Health Check information (March/April 2017)
- Independent Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2015 – 2016
- Private Fostering policy
- Short Breaks Statement
- Youth Justice Partnership Plan 2016 – 2019
- Young People’s Substance Misuse treatment plan and Needs Assessment 2016 - 2019

3.2 North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (NSSCB)

Our Safeguarding Board is proud of its partnership working and its learning culture. The vision of the Board is ‘**Working in partnership to keep children and young people of North Somerset safe**’. Our Board is here to make a real difference in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in North Somerset. It is integral to our improvement planning and well linked into our processes for continued improvement.

The Board has four key areas for Development:

- Sexual Exploitation
- Domestic Abuse
- Early Help
- Neglect.

These areas of work have subgroups, and separate action plans. Further information about the work of the Board can be found in the Annual Report and Business Plan on the Safeguarding Board Website. In addition to this, there is a young person's subgroup and their current priority area is 'Bullying'.

Our Safeguarding Board is developing a strong focus on hearing the views of children and using their experiences to influence developments to improve local safeguarding arrangements.

The sub-groups support the Board to create a culture of openness and facilitate effective and regular challenge to all partner agencies.

Our Board continues to drive the child sexual exploitation strategy and action plan and co-ordinates the partnership response to child sexual exploitation.

3.3 Practice Development Group (PDG)

The Practice Development Group meets monthly with the aim of embedding continuous improvement into day to day social work practice. Its focus over the next 12 months is on delivering consistent High Standards for social work. The PDG work plan can be found in the support and safeguarding library.

3.4 Children Looked After and Care Leavers Progress Group

This group is in place to focus on improving the outcomes of children and young people who are looked after by us. Three subgroups report into the progress group which are made up of partners from a range of different agencies. The sub groups are:

- Where Children Live
- Education, Employment and Training
- Children looked after and care leavers, Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

These subgroups all have action plans in place to drive improvement.

3.5 Business Intelligence Service

Eighteen months ago Business Intelligence was centralised within the organisation as part of our 'One Council' operating model. The new Business Intelligence Service brought together data analysts from across the Council including Children's Social Care.

The new service gave us an opportunity to review our reporting systems and methods and to ensure that front line workers are getting access to the intelligence they need to best inform their practice.

Following consultation with service leads and team leaders, the last eighteen months has seen the creation of various self-serve 'dashboards' and reports. These give a month by month view of data and performance including around Early Help, children looked after and care leavers. The next step is to ensure that data and performance reports are provided at a self-serve team level, with easy to use dashboards being available to inform teams. We also plan to make better use of predictive analytics to understand better where children might be at increased risk based on their historical profile.

4. Key areas identified for further development, 2017 - 2020:

Highlighted below are areas identified from our ongoing programme of continuous improvement, which will be areas of focus over the next three years

4.1 One Front Door

Currently our Referral and Assessment Team is based in the Town Hall, alongside our missing/CSE coordinator and the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and Referral Co-ordinators. Police colleagues sit remotely in Bridgwater but are currently undergoing a structural review, and Health agencies are currently spread across the area with different commissioners and providers. Our re-engagement lead will soon transfer into the Children's Support and Safeguarding Branch.

Our aim, shared by our partners, is to develop and have a co-located, multi-agency 'One Front Door' for North Somerset that will enhance the response to ALL referrals into social care, encompassing the entire continuum of need and improving information sharing and planning between agencies.

There is a high demand for strategy discussions (above average of statistical neighbours), which generates additional demand for statutory agencies. Furthermore, the area has high numbers of domestic abuse and drug and alcohol issues compared with neighbouring authorities.

This will be done effectively and efficiently using representatives from different statutory and non-statutory agencies, collating, analysing and sharing relevant information to build up a holistic picture of peoples circumstances and the associated risks to the child, adult and/or family. Staff within the One Front Door will make decisions on the best response and will also carry out the initial response based on the information provided.

This initiative is set within the context of a successful bid to be one of seven pilot sites nationally for the Safelives (formerly Caada) 'One Front Door' model. This pilot, commencing no later than May 2018, is funded by the Government under the Sooner the Better Programme and will enhance the multi-agency hub to respond more effectively to tackling domestic abuse. Consequently the North Somerset hub will be called 'One Front Door' (OFD) from the outset.

4.2 Early Help

Providing the right service, at the right time and at the earliest possible level of intervention is important for children and families. We need to work harder to make Early Help more accessible to children, young people and their families and support all agencies to understand their role with Early Help.

We therefore recognise the need to evolve the Early Help and High Impact Families Triage pilot and merge this with the One Front Door Project. The single database will support us to deliver a more clarified Step up and Step Down pathway between Early Help and Children's Social Care, which in turn should enable families to receive more consistent and flexible support from relevant agencies.

The Early Help Data Dashboard will ensure North Somerset and the NSSCB are able to track and monitor Early Help provision and quality across North Somerset agencies and service providers.

We are successfully delivering Early Help through the Children's Centre offer, and our known gaps are transitions from 0-5 year olds into primary schools and at 11+ years, at secondary school level. Improving the synergy between HIF delivery, Think Family and Early Help will support us to align and dovetail service delivery and improve the Early Help offer for school age children. The evolution of Children's Centres into the Family Hub model for 0-25 year olds will also support and enable good quality coordination of Early Help delivery across North Somerset.

The alignment of HIF and Early Help is progressing and to support this, the Early Help subgroup of the NSSCB will be jointly chaired by Early Help lead in Children's Social Care and the Youth Offending Service High Impact Families lead.

4.3 "Outcomes for Children" (Edge of Care Service)

The Council has commissioned a new edge of care service through a Social Impact Bond model. This new service will work on both sides of the care divide and will be called "Outcomes for Children". It will support families with children aged over 10 who are experiencing a crisis that could lead to a young person becoming looked after and will help to unify families where a child is in care under Section 20 with a plan to return home. Investment has been secured to enable the provider to develop and deliver the service and the Big Lottery will contribute up to 15% of outcome payments on a payment by results basis.

4.4 High Impact Families

Our High Impact Families programme works with families with multiple problems, such as unemployment, anti-social behaviour, truancy and mental health problems. High Impact Families in North Somerset is currently in the second year of the five year second phase of the national programme. We will continue to engage and support families who meet the criteria set out by the Government. Our High Impact Families programme has its own Board, action plan, targets etc. The Early Help subgroup of the NSSCB is jointly chaired by High Impact Families and Early Help colleagues

4.5 Children with Complex Needs and Disabilities

Our ongoing programme of review of the SEND service area has a number of key work streams. These are overseen by the SEND Programme Board and supported by colleagues in the Strategy & Policy Development Team. The current work is focused on:

- Closer joint working, reducing the complexities for users of what can feel like a fragmented service landscape
- Co-production with young people and their families

- The development a shared pathway for all children with complex needs and disabilities, focused on the Education Health and Care plan
- A move towards Personalisation and Direct Payments where appropriate
- A smooth and well planned journey for children through their teen years and into adulthood
- Challenging and supporting providers across the private and voluntary sector to become more inclusive, enabling us to reduce the dependence on specialist services wherever possible.

There have been significant changes for our Disabled Children's team at Strategic and Team Leadership level, along with challenges in sustaining front line staffing. This has limited the capacity of the team to engage fully in some of the areas of change and development.

The restructuring of the Vulnerable Learners service, which will now sit alongside the Disabled Children's team within the Support and Safeguarding branch presents opportunities for closer joint working and further exploration of integrated processes and pathways which would have been challenging in the previous structure. Over the next three years we will align closer our processes around the Education, Health and Care Plan to further improve the journey towards excellent outcomes for children and young people with disabilities and their families.

In addition to this we are developing our transitions around disability (learning disability, mental health and physical needs) for young people whose support needs meet the criteria for ongoing support packages under the Care Act 2014 into Adulthood. Our aim is to avoid a "cliff edge" around the age of 18 when the emphasis of the law and resources changes – for this reason we are developing a 0-99 disability service with a particular focus on 0-25 to mitigate this and have earlier and critically more sustained planning to independent living in the longer term.

The safeguarding of children and young people with disabilities remains a priority for us. We recognise that children and young people with disabilities are among our most vulnerable children, and that their families experience considerable challenge. We have addressed several safeguarding issues over the last year and this will continue to be a focus for development over the next three years, with our Safeguarding Team working increasingly closely to support the development of excellent practice within the team.

4.6 Sexual Exploitation (SE) and Missing

Sexual exploitation/missing is one of four priorities of the Safeguarding Board. A separate subgroup for Sexual Exploitation/Missing is chaired by the SE Missing coordinator. The strategic lead for this area is the Service Leader for Safeguarding in Adults and Children's Services.

SE and Missing is a focus of our development work for the next three years and will centre on:

- **Sexual Exploitation (SE)**
 - Continuing to raise awareness of SE and particularly signs of grooming, so we can identify young people at risk at the earliest time. (Education, parents and the community).
 - Working together collaboratively with the Co-ordinator for the West of England CSE Victim, Identification and Support Service within Avon & Somerset Police.
 - Strategic commissioned offer to our most vulnerable, high risk young people service currently provided by Barnardos.

- Build on the good relationships we have with Hotels, housing providers and taxi drivers etc to raise awareness through training.
 - Work with our local authority partners to re commission a specialist support for young people affected by SE.
 - Engagement with the Governance Board for the SE West of England network and, with our regional coordinator, to identify and disrupt suspects and perpetrators.
 - Continue to build an up to date picture of the profile of SE in North Somerset, through rigorous gathering of information, purposeful communication, and tracking and monitoring.
 - Develop our links further with local authorities who are placing young people in our area so we can effectively manage risks.
 - Developing our pathway to ensure we consistently achieve a seamless transition into adult safeguarding services.
- **Missing**
 - Continue with the 4 week missing children Review Group, attended by children missing education, police, youth offending, Health, Housing, CLA team leader and the safeguarding team from Weston Hospital to discuss children with a high number of missing episodes and those who we are concerned about to ensure robust plans are well coordinated and put in place with their Social Workers to prevent further missing episodes.
 - Ensure all Return from Missing interviews are completed within 72 hours.
 - Increase the quality, to ensure we capture essential information to safeguard the young person and forward intelligence to the police.
 - Develop links with neighbouring authorities to share good practice and processes.
 - Further develop our data, so we can track themes, patterns, trends, gaps and further develop our practice around our evidence base.
 - Strategic drive to ensure that link the between missing, CSE and criminal exploitation is clear in North Somerset and that we work with partners to ensure we identify and respond to risk to prevent children from experiencing harm.

4.7 Neglect

In 2016 SCR Holly was published. Critical and essential learning has been gleaned for all statutory agencies and Early Help providers when identifying and responding to neglect. The learning has been received and actioned as a priority for staff in a variety of agencies action plans continuing over the next three years. With our local authority partners, we are agreeing a tool for practitioners to use so that we have a consistent approach to identifying and responding to neglect. This will ensure we provide excellent and timely services for our most vulnerable children. This SCR now features in our NSSCB multi-agency safeguarding training level 3.

Our Safeguarding Board is committed to ensuring that learning from reviews is disseminated as widely as possible to professionals from partner agencies. A series of learning events have taken place.

Our Board has produced an action plan. Implementation and monitoring of progress in key improvement areas will be scrutinised by the Board until all learning points are embedded into everyday practice.

4.8 Children's Centres

North Somerset has 14 Children's Centres and continues to provide early intervention in children's lives. We have 3 outstanding Nurseries, linked to our Children's Centres and 7 recent Ofsted inspections have graded our Children Centres as good.

To sustain this work within our current resources we have identified, through a review, an opportunity for Children's Centres and Library's to work more closely together and where appropriate to be co-located.

A 3 year innovative programme has begun with a capital investment of £800,000 and we are confident this will both improve and enhance our services to children and families offering a 'one stop shop' in a non-stigmatised environment to children and their families.

Our ambition for Children's Centres is to develop a Family Hub Model for 0–25's. Examples of services delivered for older children include Young Carers service, Parenting Groups, Contact Services, Domestic Abuse projects, Portage, Think Family Groups. In addition to this we recently welcomed two mental health workers appointed to support work with children's services.

4.9 Early Years and Child Care Service

The majority of North Somerset's early years' provision is delivered by the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector. 86% of children taking up their free early years' entitlement do so in the PVI sector.

Current restructuring of the Directorate will lead to new opportunities for joint working across Children's Centres and the Early Years and Child Care Service for the benefit of our most vulnerable children.

New team plans will be developed and implemented during 2017/2018 and will take account of the Government's new policy for 30 hours of funded child care for children of working parents and the expansion of child care in the PVI sector. We will continue to work closely with our partners in schools and across the sector to narrow the attainment gap whilst maintaining our high outcomes. We will focus our resources on narrowing the gap in areas of deprivation particularly for the following children who currently do not perform as well as we would like:

- Gypsy Roma Traveller
- English as an additional language
- Refugee families
- Early Years Pupil Premium
- Children Looked After
- SEND

4.10 High Standards for Social work

Previous self-assessments of our social work practice have identified that although we have many examples of excellent and good social work, we have not always been able to say this is consistently the case.

Over the next three years, led by our Principal Social Worker, and driven by our Practice Development Group, we will focus on achieving High Standards of Social Work consistently.

Using a Solution Focused Theoretical Model, Appendix 1 shows our vision, strategic objectives and the principles behind our improvement plans.

Our strategic objectives include:

1. Early Help Interventions are planned and coordinated to make a difference to children's wellbeing
2. Children and young people are identified and safeguarded from emotional and physical harm in a timely and effective way
3. Permanence options, including reunification, are robustly assessed and decisions are made and implemented within a timeframe which meets the child's best interests
4. Our children who remain looked after have improved outcomes
5. Our children looked after and our care leavers are supported to transition into adult life through a holistic plan

These will be underpinned by six core principles;

1. Emotionally Resilient and stable Workforce
2. Workforce Training & Development to drive high standards
3. Social work 'toolkit', skills and knowledge, advocating for children
4. Personal Leadership (Professional judgement, analysis, accountability, reflective social work and QA)
5. Organisational Framework – Clear Policy and Procedures for high Standards of Social Work
6. The workforce demonstrate passion, ambition and commitment to deliver high standards for social work

Appendix 2 outlines the structure we have in place to drive, implement, support and challenge the progress and pace of improvement. The most recent addition being the Network group set up especially for Social Workers. We believe this will further strengthen our 'Golden Thread' between our vision for children and families at all levels of the workforce.

Appendix 3 shows our Continuous Improvement Planning Timetable for 2017. It highlights a programme of events which has developed over the last couple of years, and is regularly adapted to meet changing needs.

The training events change every year, but our key principle is to work with evidence based research and closely with our University partners.

Now that our Principal Social Worker is in place and we have a clear structure for continuous improvement, we are confident we will be moving towards delivering consistently High Standards Social Work for our children young people and families. The continuous improvement work streams for the Principal Social Worker will integrate with the retention and recruitment planning to ensure we have a highly qualified, valued, with high standards for children and stable workforce.

4.11 Information Sharing

We are jointly working with Bristol and South Gloucestershire on the Connecting Care project to ensure that information sharing between Health and Social Care is improved. The system pulls together health and social care information that was not previously linked in any way and enables authorised professionals in hospitals, community settings, GP practices, out-of-hours

services, social and mental health care teams to see a single electronic care record view of information about the person they are caring for or working with. It provides:

- Better information sharing between local health and social care organisations
- Joined up information to ensure care is focussed around the individual and their needs
- Improved better, safer and more joined-up care
- Supported increased efficiency in the delivery of health and social care services
- Ensure that the people who are providing the care have the information need, when they need it

4.12 Female Genital Mutilation

There have been a small number of cases in North Somerset and we anticipate that as partners become more aware through training we may see an increase in referrals. Training is ongoing and a new policy and flow chart have been developed for staff so that everyone is clear as to our response when a referral is received or concerns are raised.

4.13 Asylum Seekers

On 1st July 2016 there was a change to Government policy in respect of unaccompanied asylum seeking children termed the Interim National Transfer Protocol. This enables local authorities with a high density population of unaccompanied asylum seeking children to transfer the legal duty of their care to another local authority with a lower density population.

'The interim transfer protocol forms the basis of a voluntary agreement made between local authorities to ensure a fairer distribution of unaccompanied children across all local authorities and all regions across the UK. It is intended to ensure that any local authority does not face an unmanageable responsibility in accommodating and looking after unaccompanied children'. (Interim National Transfer Protocol Guidance 2016/2017)

The South West Region have agreed to a rota system whereby we each in turn take a proportion of USAC up to our designated limit which is worked out to be 0.07% of our child population. For North Somerset this equates to 30. The South West Council Association is running the rota on behalf of the South West local authorities.

Within North Somerset this has led to several initiatives being put into place to increase the knowledge and skills base of our staff working with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and to develop services that will meet the needs of this group of children and young people sufficiently. This has included the provision of specialist training to staff, delivered by Solihull local authority, recruitment of more specialist and targeted foster carers, and the creation of a working group to focus on the development of support groups and community partnerships to support these children and young people's transition effectively into the UK.

4.14 Improved Attendance and Attainment of Children who are Looked After by us

Virtual school staff will focus on providing necessary support and challenge to schools to ensure that all of our children who are looked after make accelerated progress. The introduction of attendance monitoring and the E.PEP system are key factors in enabling us to track more carefully and intervene earlier.

The new EPEP will enable us to:

- actively listen and respond to the child or young person
- effectively work together as a team to support the child or young person's outcomes
- track progress from PEP to PEP
- monitor the impact of interventions and the use of pupil premium spend
- rigorously fulfil our support and challenge role to schools

Over the next three years, we will build on the very good relationship we have with schools. Our aim is that these tools will enable all partners – schools, social workers, IRO's and the virtual school to work together efficiently and effectively to improve children's educational outcomes.

4.15 Alternative Provision

Following the Alternative Provision review which is undertaken February-July 2017, our aim is to identify the range of provision which is required in order to support our schools and provide appropriate educational and social emotional and behavioural provision for all young people. We anticipate that over the next three years we will action the results of the Alternative Provision review.

4.16 Improving Children Looked After, Care Leavers and adopted Children's Emotional Wellbeing, Mental and Physical Health

We have recognised within North Somerset that we need to review our current provision for the mental health needs of our looked after children due to our SDQ data indicating on average our looked after children have a higher score than the national average.

In North Somerset we have a designated CONSULT Service dedicated to the mental health needs of looked after children comprised of a psychologist, specialist social worker and 2 Family support worker posts. CONSULT provide a range of intervention including direct work and coaching for children and foster carers, group work for our looked after children and training for staff and foster carers.

We are undertaking several measures as part of this review to improve the emotional well-being of our children and young people. Currently all children in care with a high SDQ score, or who have experienced more than 2 placement moves in 12 months are referred to the fortnightly improving outcomes meeting, which is a multi-agency group focused on intervention to improve mental health, and emotional and placement stability for our looked after children. To further enhance the impact of these multi-agency services we are developing care pathways through our Consult Service to more clearly define the intervention for our children looked after through better analysis of the SDQ scores. Exploration is being undertaken regarding other measures for mental health that may be utilised with our looked after children to assess their need through the CONSULT work. Furthermore we are developing a therapeutic package of foster carer training as a targeted intervention for children with high SDQ scores and to embed the principles of therapeutic parenting within the fostering service.

Through our children's rights officer we are developing a broader range of positive activities for our looked after children and our care leavers to raise self-esteem and emotional well-being. We are of the view that these measures will assist in improving the mental health and emotional well-being of our children looked after and improve their overall outcomes in our care.

A new strategy and action plan has been published '*The North Somerset multi agency emotional wellbeing and mental health strategy for children young people looked after and care leavers 2017–2019*' to inform our work locally around improving the wellbeing of our children

and care leavers mental health. It is aligned to the national recommendations set out in 'Future in Mind' and our CAMHS local transformation plan (LTP), building on the CYP IAPT Transformation programme.

We have put new systems in place around improving the return rate of SDQs and to reduce the number in the *cause for concern* category, providing interventions at the earliest opportunity for children, young people and their carers.

The North Somerset Fostering Strategy outlines our strategic plans to continue to embed principles of therapeutic parenting into our fostering service which will be underpinned by a therapeutic training programme, to improve the mental health and emotional well-being of our children looked after. The emotional and mental health of children and young people is a key priority for North Somerset within its Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The importance of the health of children and young people in care cannot be overstated. Most children become looked after as a result of abuse and neglect. Although they have many of the same health issues as their peers, the extent of these is often greater because of their past experiences. Delays in identifying and meeting their emotional well-being and mental health needs can have far reaching effects on all aspects of their lives, including their chances of reaching their potential and leading happy and healthy lives as adults.

The children looked after and care leavers health team takes every opportunity to reverse this situation by providing and signposting children and young people in care to appropriate health care. It is commissioned by North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group and is hosted by the provider services North Somerset Community Partnership. The core business of this team is to undertake statutory children looked after Review Health Assessments (RHA's).

The team is contracted to provide an advisory service to care leavers.

The team is responsible for completing RHA's for North Somerset's children and young people, where the placement is within four hours travel (return journey) of North Somerset. The rationale for this is to provide continuity of care and a more robust oversight of the health needs of children and young people who are placed out of county.

The team is also required to undertake RHA's for children looked after placed in North Somerset by other Local Authorities (OLA's).

Initial Health Assessments (IHA) are completed by a Community Paediatrician. This should be within 20 days of the child or young person being accommodated as outlined in the Statutory Guidance 'Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children – March 2015'.

It is important to recognise that redressing health inequalities for children looked after and care leavers expands beyond undertaking statutory health assessments.

The health and well-being of children looked after and care leavers is 'Everybody's Business'. Professionals in North Somerset strive to work collaboratively to deliver services holistically.

This is particularly evidenced by:

- Health and Independent Reviewing Officers quarterly meetings
- Good multi-agency attendance to the newly named Children Looked After and Care Leavers Health and Well-Being Partnership meeting.

- A clear and action focussed work plan developed collaboratively by the health and wellbeing partnership meeting.
- Designated Nurse for children looked after and care leavers' attendance at the Improving Outcomes, Children Looked After Progress Group, Performing Well Group and Sexual Exploitation subgroup.
- There are clear systems and processes between both organisations to enable robust communication pathways, ensuring the right information gets to the right person at the right time.

Moving forward, further work around collating evidence on the children looked after health team's 'value added' by reporting outcomes which demonstrate wider determinants and indicates possible savings upstream would be beneficial.

For example, data on maintaining placements, improving access to education, identifying previously unmet/undetected health needs and facilitating access to services. This piece of work will also provide information regarding the health themes of North Somerset children looked after and reduce unwarranted variation in provision of health care/access to services. It may also provide data for outcome measures.

Outcome measures for children looked after can be challenging to evidence due to the interventions typically being qualitative. Therefore the impact of the intervention may be evidenced more longitudinally.

4.17 Care Leavers

Over the next three years, we will focus on:

- Improved transition arrangements and support for independence for children looked after and our care leaving young people
- Improving the number of care leavers who are in education, employment and training and developing further our Apprenticeship work
- Increasing support to all care leavers up to age 25 in anticipation in the change of legislation for care leaver support
- Reducing the number of care leavers in custody
- Building on our package of support to support from care to adulthood
- Focusing on improving the quality, support and diversity of supported housing provision to our care leavers, particularly those with complex needs in line with the Barnardos framework. Increasing the proportion of our care leavers who stay put after leaving care. Anna Whelan has been involved in providing consultancy to North Somerset in respect of this issue
- Continuing to build upon community partnerships to ensure our care leavers have access to a diverse range of community support
- Focusing on improving the health, well-being and emotional health of our care leavers through better access to supporting mental health services and an increase in access to positive activities

4.18 Safeguarding, Reviewing and Quality Assurance Service

Over the next three years the Independent Safeguarding, Reviewing and Quality Assurance Service have ambitious plans for development and improvement.

The service will continue to make significant steps in implementing improvements in practice. Although the next 12 months will be a challenging time for the service, they are committed to the areas identified for development. Those areas include:

- Further developing children looked after participation and improving child protection conference participation by embedding the use of consultation and increasing the support to young people to enable them to chair their own looked after reviews as appropriate.
- Continue to learn from the findings and recommendations of the many audits that have been completed, and implement into practice. The audits provide ongoing scrutiny of the role of the IRO in the care planning process.
- All IRO's will attend relevant social work skills workshops over the forthcoming year in order to identify learning and development needs specific to the role. This will support in increasing relevant skills, knowledge and understanding, and will ensure that the Service is in the strongest position possible to deliver on its priorities and objectives.

In order to achieve consistently high quality outcomes for the people we work with, the service will be further developing the responsibility of the Independent Reviewing Officer to consistently be a key driver in relation to the improvement of care planning for children looked after with particular emphasis on challenging drift and delay. This will include having a wider overview of the case, reducing drift or delay and ensuring all children have a permanency plan in place by their second child looked after review.

In addition:

- The service will be robustly quality assuring the care planning process for children looked after and ensure the wishes and feelings of the children and young people are given full consideration, while challenging all aspects of their journey as a means of achieving the best possible outcomes for them of good practice, as well as areas for improvement.
- The service will be devising a robust Quality Management Framework (QMF) with a core ambition to centralise the child in delivering a timely and effective service towards the most positive outcome.
- The service is further developing the link of a Safeguarding and Reviewing Officer to the Disabled Children's Team on a consultation basis.
- The service will be introducing an independent review process to ensure children in private fostering arrangements are safeguarded and progressing well.
- The service will be introducing an independent review process for pathway planning for our care leavers.

Over the next 3 years we will be further developing our multi-disciplined Safeguarding Reviewing and Quality Assurance Service specialising in the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk in North Somerset. This will include monitoring of social work standards and recommending best practice within the profession to ensure good consistent and effective practice in line with statutory, departmental and inter-agency standards, in order to achieve consistently high quality outcomes for the people we work with.

Designated Officer for Allegations

- North Somerset has one Designated Officer for Allegations (DOfA), involved in the management and oversight of individual cases where allegations are made against people who work with children in any setting across North Somerset. The Guidance and

procedures apply where there are concerns or it is alleged that an adult who works with children, either as an employee or in a voluntary capacity has:

- Behaved in a way that may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed an offence against a child
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates that they are unsuitable to work with children

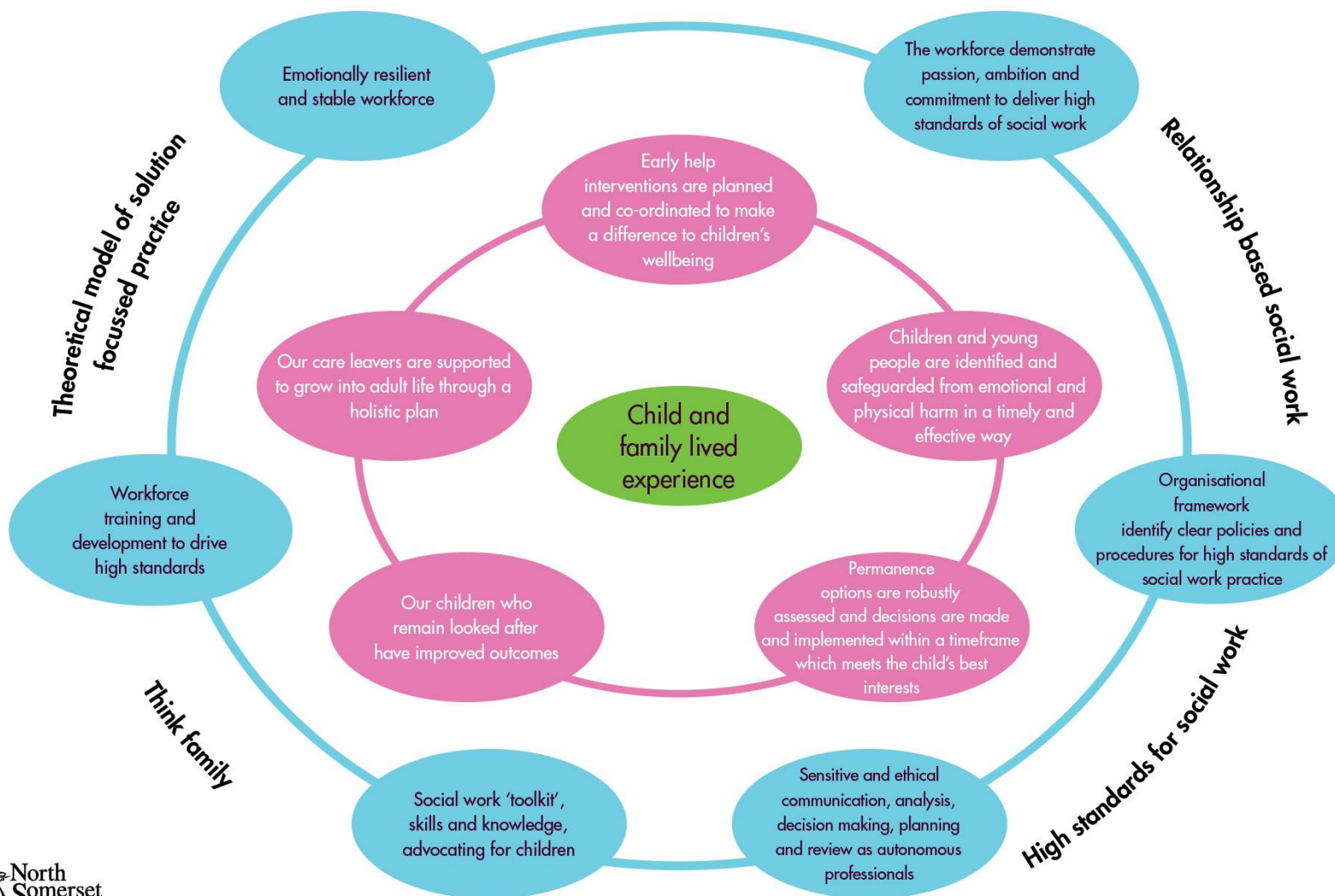
Over the next three years, the DOfA service will continue to develop working relationships across children's services and with external statutory partners, including HR and Designated Officers across the South West. This will help build a coordinated and consistent approach to allegations management, facilitate the dissemination of guidelines in respect of safe working practice and aid the development of organisational cultures which facilitate safeguarding.

(For further information see Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report.)

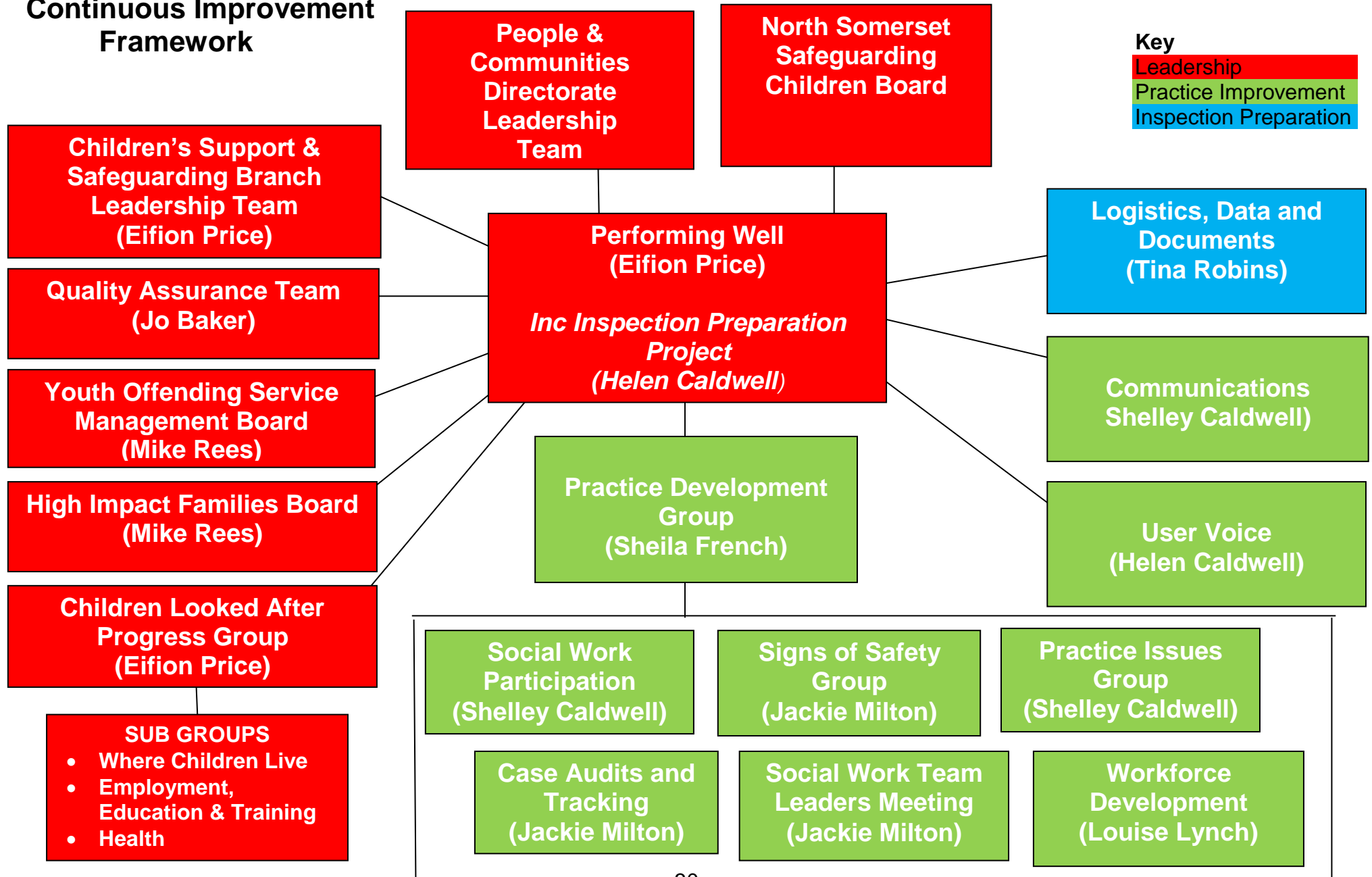
4.19 Adoption Reform

Progression to the Regional Adoption Agency is currently planned for April 2018. North Somerset Council are currently working with BANES, South Gloucester, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Bristol to align policies and procedures etc. In addition to this consideration is being given to whether Special Guardianship Orders will be included as part of this initiative.

High standards for social work practice



Continuous Improvement Framework



Improvement Planning Overview

Quarterly

- Safeguarding Board
- Performing Well
- Support and Safeguarding managers meeting
- Children's Champions (Corporate Parenting Board)
- Children Looked After and Care Leavers Progress Group (Including Health, Where Children Live and Education, Employment and Training subgroups which report to this group)

Monthly

- Practice Development Group
- Practice Improvement Group
- High Standards for Social Workers training workshops
- Social Work Participation network
- Community Family Team Leaders meeting
- Ambitious Voice (Children in Care Council)
- Unite (Care Leavers forum)
- Performing Well newsletter
- Audit Programme

Fortnightly

- SAST

Social Work Training Plan for 2017

All Staff have access to Research in Practice and are encouraged to use to support their own CPD and support their practice

A full training programme can be found in the Support and Safeguarding Library

Continuous Improvement Planning - Timetable 2017

January	Completion of single Database
February	Principal Social worker Evaluation North Somerset Safeguarding Board Children's Annual Development and Priority Setting Day, including Grade Descriptors self-evaluation Social worker Practitioner group set up
March	Grade Descriptors – Self Assessment workshops Your Life Your Care - Annual survey for CLA Value and mission statement finalised Completion of Step Up cohort 4 Safeguarding Board meets Children Looked After Celebration event
April	Launch of new Edge of Care Service Social worker - Health Check
May	Peer Challenge – Neglect (date to be confirmed)
June	Proposed interviews for Step UP Cohort 5 (subject to successful Bid) Safeguarding Board
July	
August	
September	Annual Celebration of Social Work Conference
October	Care Leavers week Annual Survey for Care Leavers
November	
December	Care Leavers Celebration event