

# **North Somerset Children's Services ILACS**

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# Overall picture

## Consistent messages from the inspectors:

You know yourselves well

You know where you've made progress (and we agree)

You know what more needs to be done (and we agree)

You have solid foundations in place



# Early Help

## What went well:

- Early Help is a strength and is making a positive difference
- Offer effective intervention and extensive range of services
- Effective Early Help triage
- Inspectors noted we have a waiting list, but oversight is good and we support families in the interim
- Clunky step up/step down addressed

## Even better if...

- Moving forward, we use our 'Early Help Project' to reinvigorate the lead professional role and team around the child in NSC



# Front Door

## What went well:

- The interface between the Front Door and Early Help is clearly and effectively differentiated. There are clear lines between workers, providing timely response to children's needs. Parents' consent is always sought and overridden when there are safeguarding concerns
- The team were proud, enthusiastic, and the vibe was positive
- The team demonstrated a shift in response times and strengthened curiosity since the last inspection
- Most referrals progressing to NFA are appropriate and there is a reduction in repeat contacts
- Timely allocation from MASH into FSS teams – generally 24hrs – they did see some delays
- Most strategy meetings take place promptly to assess risk and formulate multi-agency plans

## Even better if...

- Information is more evaluative and succinct



# Missing and Exploitation

## What went well:

- Recognised we are building momentum in terms of strengthening response, including the weekly missing meeting and increased resources
- Acknowledged more to do to strengthen strategic response however, evidence of good practice at operational level
- When children go missing responses are effective with timely information sharing between us and police
- Strategy meetings being held for children missing over 24 hrs
- RHIs – know ourselves well via feedback and practice – evidence of linking work to strengthen response to exploitation

## Even better if...

- Response to RHIs are more timely (within 72 hours) and recording contains more detail and we can evidence learning from repeat missing episodes



# Emergency Duty Team

## What went well:

- Strong relationships between NSC and EDT and they benefit from having a dedicated on call manager from NSC at all times
- They provide appropriate responses to children, have shared resources and know the key partners
- Strategy discussions and joint visits are good, information is progressed in a timely way and EDT feel able to raise concerns appropriately and professionally with the relevant Head of Service



# Education

## What went well:

- Sustained capacity issues but clear reviews of where we are have taken place and recent improvements which are beginning to have an impact
- A number of children with no or reduced hours of education
- Intervention plans in place for most but not all children
- Schools positive about future – the strategy, trauma informed and relational practice
- Most find the input of the LA staff constructive and positive
- Social workers sensitised to the importance of Education
- Variability in the PEPs – some targets smarter and broken down more than others
- Plans in place to address this
- Oversight of the safety of EHE students impacted by historical capacity issues

## Even better if...

- Targets for children are smarter and consistent with EHCPs
- Balance of focus on children's wellbeing and educational needs is improved
- Urgency of intervention consistent for every child
- Transition arrangements put in place to help children return to full time education



# Child in Need and Child Protection

- Staff are enthusiastic and capable and know their children and families well
- Recognized that caseloads are higher than usual for some workers
- Where assessments are strong, they are detailed and address risk and concern and evidence understanding of the child's voice
- Evidence of meaningful work with parents about their history

## Even better if...

- Less variability in the quality of assessments, planning including contingency plans and management oversight and supervision
- Less delay in allocation in FS and SG in some cases
- Strengthened understanding of the impact of chronic neglect on children to inform swifter planning and action (repeat CPPs)
- Core Groups are held consistently and used to support change





# Children with Disabilities

## What went well:

- Quality of work is strong with comprehensive packages of short break care and positive examples of CAMHS intervention
- Views of children and families well represented in plans and strong relationships and direct work
- Actively engaging with parents and carers to inform service development

## Even better if...

- Management oversight and supervision is consistent
- Less variability in quality of plans



# Pre-proceedings and permanence planning

## What went well:

- Strengthened oversight and collaborative working via permanence tracking panel
- Care and Resource Panel provides effective oversight
- Strong early permanence planning including pre-birth assessments
- Some successful diversion of children out of pre-proceedings
- Strong court work with good quality written information

## Even better if...

- Consider all permanence options concurrently at the earliest opportunity



# Children in Care

## What went well:

- Social workers know their children well and are focused on developing positive relationships
- When there are immediate issues of harm, timely decisions are made to ensure children are looked after
- Children are supported to remain with their placements where there may be vulnerabilities
- A high number of children are looked after in family arrangements, including kinship arrangements

## Even better if...

- Children are routinely offered an independent advocate
- All CiC have an up to date assessment which clearly identifies needs
- Children are visited more frequently



# Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Service

## What went well:

- The LADO role has effective oversight in tracking and timeliness of referrals.
- CPCs and CiC reviews are timely
- Evidence was seen of appropriate decision making for children, comprehensive minutes and time-limited action planning to reduce risk
- Some evidence of challenge and appropriate escalation was seen

## Even better if...

- The quality of response in relation to allegations is consistent and links between the LADO and Fostering Service are stronger
- Contingency planning is evident in all CPPs
- Plans are used to drive progress and progress is monitored between reviews



# Placements for children

## What went well:

- Extensive work taking place to identify and move children to appropriate placements and homes
- Good oversight of children in unregistered arrangements
- Decisions in relation to unregistered arrangements are child focused and based on need
- Where children are in unregistered arrangements pro-active plans are made to move children into registered provisions

## Even better if...

- Confirm practice standards for monitoring and maintaining oversight of unregistered arrangements
- Strengthen understanding of the difference between care and support placements



# Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people

## What went well:

- Timely response to ensure immediate needs are met
- Staff respond in a caring way, meet emotional health, social and practical needs, and are strong advocates
- Young people understand their legal rights and are supported to achieve outcomes for asylum applications
- Staff recognise culture, ethnicity, trauma, and legal complexities

## Even better if...

- Unaccompanied children do not always benefit from RHIs



# Private fostering

## What went well:

- Generally strong and effective practice
- Good communications plan for raising the profile
- Close collaborative working across FS and SG and Fostering
- Assessments and visits are timely

## Even better if...

- Clear contingency planning is in place



# Fostering

## What went well:

- Strengthened management capacity and clear vision for improvement and positive change
- Stable, enthusiastic and experienced SSW team with real commitment to get things right for children and carers
- Clear, targeted recruitment strategy for foster carers
- Fostering Panel – panel chair has future developments planned, evidence of safe and suitable decisions made
- Training – FCs feel they are well trained and have access to specialist training but mixed views about online training hub although it provides the training they need
- A mixed picture on the adequacy of the information provided to foster carers
- Mockingbird is a strength – foster carers totally positive about this and value the community feel of hubs – evidence that it helps prevent unplanned endings
- Foster carers felt well supported by SSW

## Even better if

- Support groups for children who foster and male foster carers





# Adoption

## What went well:

- Arrangements with Adoption West are working well with a clear grip and oversight of the quality of service from the Regional Adoption Agency
- The Regional Adoption Agency reported positive working relationships and great information sharing and communication with seamless transitions into placements for children
- Effective recruitment of adopters – all spoken to were so positive about their experience
- Assessments are good quality, comprehensive and timely
- Good use of early permanence placements – 6 placements in the last 12 months
- Life story books and later life letters promptly and comprehensively undertaken – positive joined up work with birth parents



# Leaving Care

## What went well:

- PAs are aspirational for care experienced young people (CEYP) and encourage them to set goals high. They work hard to keep in touch and provide support across a range of needs
- Strong work by PAs in relation to racial, cultural, sexual and gender identity
- Young people understand their legal rights and are supported to achieve outcomes for asylum applications
- CEYP who are not in education, employment, or training benefit from strong support from PAs, job coaches and organisations
- Most CEYP are in suitable accommodation and making progress with employment and studies – When a CEYP is in unsuitable accommodation, PAs provide consistent support, encouraging them to move into suitable accommodation

## Even better if...

- All CEYP have access to their health histories
- Increased numbers of CEYP are in education, training, and employment



# Participation

## What went well:

- CEYP participation in service developments is strengthened by the role of the Young Director and Participation Officer
- The Young Director makes a real contribution to strengthen engagement – she's a real positive and visible role model, a catalyst for change, and an advocate for CEYP
- The Participation Team has played an important role in the themed Corporate Parenting Panel meetings provided around language that cares
- Children in care are positive about the use of MOMO

## Even better if...

- Widening the reach of this work



# Quality Assurance

## What went well:

- Progress in the implementation of the QA Framework. The programme of activity is clear
- Increased capacity in the QA service has sharpened focus
- The Collaborative Practice Review tool is beneficial when used effectively
- Thematic and Team Spotlights help us respond to urgent practice improvements

## Even better if...

- The quality of CPRs is strengthened via a shared understanding of what Good looks like and use of evidence to inform judgements
- Actions from audit are easy to understand and SMART



# Areas for improvement

## Variability in the quality of:

- Assessments
- Care plans
- Contingency planning
- Visits to children
- Direct work with children (incl life story work)
- Drives to achieve improved outcomes for children
- Supervision
- Management oversight

**Which results in a lack of consistency of practice across teams**



# A tremendous effort...

## Over the course of the inspection we:

- Submitted 160 management information documents, 144 audit documents, all of our child-level data, and a further 159 additional documents over the course of the inspection for a total of 463 documents
- Recorded 48 pages (15,650 words) of minutes from meetings with inspectors
- Had 53 members of staff meet with inspectors
- Set up a total of 110 interviews across staff, members, external partners...(and rearranged 18)





“I want to change the world,” said Tiny Dragon.

“Start with the next person who needs your help,”  
replied Big Panda

