

Appendix 1

HMI Ofsted undertook (on the 27/28 July 2022) the fourth monitoring visit focusing on planning for and achieving permanence for children. The letter dated 1/09/2022 is attached for your review. Overall, the findings were positive with affirmation that the pace of improvement is now improving, having been too slow.

The summary of the areas to improve are as follows.

Area	Action to be taken	Progress to date
<i>Some children experience drift and delay in decision making planning and achieving permanence. Current tracking systems are not robust enough, the Local Authority has plans to refresh these systems, but these were not in place at the time of the visit.</i>	Current tracking systems for pre-proceedings, PLO and Permanence tracking to be further developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-proceedings tracker – meeting arranged on the 9/09/2022 to reconfigure process so that the letter to parents and permanence plan is clearly evidenced on the tracker. This requires system change and expected implementation is the 30/09/2022• Permanence tracker- change required to the administrative process and recording mechanisms so that the child's journey is easily identified and the timescales evident. The second meeting is scheduled for 12/09/2022 to confirm arrangements and the new format is expected to be in operation by 15/09/2022.
<i>The practice for assessing children's needs to achieve their long-term permanence plan is inconsistent and decision making for children returning home to parents is not always based on an up-to-date assessment of children's needs and their parents ability to meet those needs.</i>	Continue to drive the quality of assessments across all areas to ensure the above is included. To monitor progress and quality through quality assurance processes including performance reporting. To Undertake further specific training for the CWLA service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment are a key part of the 'brilliant at the basics' vision for St Helens CSC and specific actions for this area are included in the existing Improvement plan.• Audit undertaken 27/28 July 2022 identifies improvement in the quality of the assessments, including improvements around the exploration of parenting capacity and motivation to change.• Specific support to managers and Advanced Practitioners has been provided on assessments and ensuring the quality of those assessments• 1:1 support has been provided to Social Workers when completing assessments to ensure focus of identification and impact.• Further Quality Assurance of assessments will be undertaken through the full case file audits and thematic reviews. (September onwards)• Scheduling of the specific training for the CWLA service is in progress (likely to be October)
<i>Children's care plans are not always clear, as they lack timescales and actions are not specific enough.</i>	Training on SMART planning has already taken place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of plans are a key part of the 'brilliant at the basics' vision for St Helens CSC and specific actions for this area are included in the existing Improvement plan.• Training around planning has been delivered across all teams• 1:1 support from the Improvement Team has been provided to practitioners• Thematic Audit on quality of planning is scheduled to take place 07/09/2022 and will conclude 14/09/2022• Further Quality Assurance Planning will be undertaken through the full case file audits and thematic reviews.• Scheduling of the specific training for the CWLA service is in progress (likely to be October)

Area	Action to be taken	Progress to date
<i>Contingency planning for children is not always evidenced at an early enough stage and it is not always clear what will happen next if the plan is not achieved.</i>	Practitioners to be supported around the development of contingency planning. The links with contingency planning, networks and outcomes will be explicit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contingency planning is one of the key areas identified as a priority and is included in the existing improvement plan. Training has been written and dates for delivery have been set to start 26/09/2022 and 33 sessions have been arranged. Specific training for CWLA to explore networks and reunification planning. 1:1 Support from the Improvement Team will be offered across all teams.
<i>Too many records include language and content for children that is not child friendly and they shift between the first and the third person</i>	Guidance to be given to Practitioners on when and how to write to children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the 05/08 practitioners were given specific guidance by the AD for CSC on areas were recording in a child centred manner but in the third person. The only exceptions being, Care Planning, Child's review meetings and Pathway documentation that would be directly to the child/Young person. Voice of Child champions Practitioners Group are driving practice around voice of the child and how this is reflected across the levels of need. Dip sampling is in progress and will inform the planning should any support be required in this area.
<i>Leaders need to be informed by a regular programme of case file audits in order to be fully assured of quality of practice across children's social care and the impact on children's outcomes.</i>	Launch the QAF. Combine findings from all quality assurance activity on a 6 monthly basis to ensure senior leaders and members understand the quality of service delivery and practice improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QAF signed off and implemented 19/09/2022 full case file and observations of practice will be undertaken during this week by a range of senior managers and leaders. Refreshed Practice Standards that align with the 'being Brilliant at the Basics' improvement programme will be launched on the 26/09/2022 Supervision policy has been refreshed and training is scheduled for all managers and staff commencing 26/09. St Helens Partners in Practice Stockport LA (good LA) are assisting with the development of the QAF programme.