



Ofsted Improvement Plan

November 2023

The Ofsted inspection undertaken in July 2023, highlighted a significant deterioration in the quality and impact of services for children in Swindon since 2019. Whilst some areas of strong practice were observed within children's services, they found that too many children are left with unassessed needs and risks, plans that drift and children and young people experience too many changes of social worker.

Ofsted identified the following improvement areas for priority action:

1

The consistency and appropriateness with which thresholds for intervention and the provision of support are understood and applied for children in need or at risk of harm.

2

How accurately assessments identify children's needs and risks and support the framing of timely and clear plans that match children's circumstances.

3

The regularity and effectiveness of management oversight.

4

The opportunities for children to build a relationship of trust with a single consistent social worker, rather than experiencing multiple changes of worker.

5

The number and range of foster homes and children's homes and other placements the local authority has available, to help ensure that children live in stable homes that are well matched to their needs.

6

How quickly children are matched to permanent carers.

7

The reliability and effectiveness of systems to record data and records about children and how well these are used to understand and support improvements in practice and services

This improvement plan sets out how we are, as a council with our partners, going to improve the services we deliver for children and families in Swindon.



**Cabinet member for
Children's Social Care**
Councillor Dixon comments:

"The new Labour administration takes the Ofsted findings and recommendations extremely seriously, and recognises the need for a robust corporate and partnership approach to drive improvement in Swindon. I am extremely committed to this Ofsted Improvement Plan, and see it as an excellent framework in which to ensure practice is good, and that we are supporting children and young people in Swindon to achieve better outcomes, at every stage of their lives. I want to thank all colleagues from across the council and partner agencies that have contributed to this plan, the transformation programme and wider improvement work."

Our Improvement Plan

This plan forms part of our wider transformation plan which was commenced in February 2023 which sets out our intentions for improvement beyond simply responding to our inspection recommendations. Our 2-year plan is to deliver real and sustainable transformation that delivers improved outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people built upon the foundations highlighted below:

Practice: Improve the quality of practice with our children and families to enable improved outcomes at every level of need.

People: Ensure we have a stable experienced workforce who are well supported with opportunities to learn and develop their careers.

Place: Ensure we are able to provide excellent homes for our children and young people within the local area that meet their identified and future needs.

Process: Improve the quality of our management and data systems so we are able to use evidence to drive our improvement.

Following the inspection, there has been considerable significant focus on these priority areas, many of which we had already identified and incorporated into our existing Transformation programme. We have moved swiftly to:

- 1. Ensure our front door is safe.** We are creating a new front door, "Contact Swindon," to ensure our families get the right support at the right time, from ourselves and our multi-agency partners, which will ensure our MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) is there to address risk factors and act with pace where needed. This will ensure clarity around thresholds when families need statutory intervention
- 2. Workforce** – we have renewed and strengthening our continuing recruitment activities to ensure we have enough committed, permanent social workers and managers to improve outcomes for our children and young people.
- 3. Sufficiency** – We have increased our efforts to recruit more foster carers in Swindon, to give our children we look after the opportunity to maintain their family networks, friendships, and links to their wider communities.

Governance and Oversight

The Improvement Board, overseen by an Independent Chair, will provide effective governance, oversight and challenge of our Improvement Plan and programme of work to ensure that all the recommendations outlined in the Ofsted report are responded to and the plan improves outcomes for the children and young people of Swindon. The Board will include officers of the Council, the Leader, Lead Member for children, strategic leaders from our multi-agency partners, as well as the Local Government Association a, Sector Lead Improvement Partner, and the Department for Education Improvement Advisor (DfE (Department for Education)). The Board will meet every six weeks. A Delivery Board, chaired by the Director of Children's Services will continue to sit below the Improvement Board, and will monitor the priority workstreams that make up our Improvement and Transformation plan. Each workstream will have its own board.

In addition, there will be oversight of the Improvement Plan from our elected Members at Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Corporate Parenting Board will focus on improving outcomes for our children we look after, and our care experienced young people. The Council Corporate Management Team will also continue with its resourcing, support, and challenge role.

There will also be regular meetings with the DfE and our Sector Led Improvement Partner to evaluate our progress and impact. Ofsted will return to undertake a monitoring visit in February/ March, and thereafter will return to Swindon every three to four months, to track the progress of improvement.



1. Practice: Improve the consistency and appropriateness with which thresholds for intervention and the provision of support are understood and applied for children in need or at risk of harm.

What we need to do	By whom – operational leads	By when	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/evidence – How will we know we are making a difference
<p>Ensure our front door to service is safe, by:</p> <p>Ensuring robust screening of all contacts results in families getting the right support at the right time (including out of hours services).</p> <p>We will ensure Contact Swindon has skilled and experienced staff able to identify level of needs and signpost to the right service/ assessment team to address need when identified.</p> <p>We have reinstated the Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) Strategic Board to ensure better strategic and operational join up across all partners to reduce risk factors in a timely way.</p> <p>Developing and implementing the MASH improvement plan based on findings of MASH diagnostic, as well as Ofsted feedback and staff engagement which will then lead to more timely responses to contacts and referrals.</p> <p>Ensure threshold decisions are robust by taking into consideration all agency checks, family history and previous involvement and changes in circumstance. This will allow for better signposting to the right service at the right time for children.</p> <p>We need to ensure regular audit of our work at the front door with our partners through thematic audits to share thresholds and practice.</p>	<p>Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Executive</p> <p>MASH Strategic Board Lead Members</p>	<p>Jan 2024</p> <p>Dec 2024</p>	<p>Our children, young people, and their families will receive the right help at the right time.</p> <p>We will see reducing timescales to provide an effective response to referrals, including out of normal office hours.</p> <p>Our children and young people receive help that is proportionate to risk; our children and families are not routinely subjected to formal risk protection investigations if these are not necessary.</p> <p>There will be clear consistent practice and decisions made by our day and out of hour services to ensure consistent practice.</p>	<p>We will see that our regular multi-agency audits of threshold decisions show good practice, including quality of referral and effectiveness of response. We want to see at least 60% in year 1 graded GOOD and in year 2 over 70% as we progress.</p> <p>Our front door staff will tell us through regular staff feedback that they are managing workload demand better and working better together as one service.</p> <p>Our feedback from referrers will tell us we are responding in a timely way and getting back to referrers with follow up.</p> <p>We will see less statutory work coming into Children's Social care as we will be identifying and supporting Partners to identify need at a lower level at the new locality panels and into our Contact Swindon.</p>

<p>Redesign the front door to create “Contact Swindon” to ensure we can direct, signpost, and assess at pace all contacts and direct work when it is required to our MASH.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC (Swindon Borough Council)</p> <p>Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Executive</p>	<p>Feb 2024</p>	<p>Our children and young people, including unborn babies, are protected, the risks to them are identified and managed through timely decisions and the help provided reduces the risk of, or actual harm to them</p> <p>The interface between early help and statutory child protection work is clearly and effectively differentiated, and in some cases, the need for targeted or statutory services is lessened or avoided.</p> <p>Information sharing between agencies and professionals is timely, specific, and effective – the use of parental consent and when to dispense with this is clear and based on a child likely to suffer significant harm or further harm.</p> <p>Thresholds for intervention accord with the requirements of legislation, are appropriate, understood by partners, consistently applied, well embedded, reviewed and updated regularly. Drift and delay are avoided. Neglect and Domestic Abuse are identified appropriately and responded to. Our children and young people receive help that is proportionate to risk; children and families are not routinely subjected to formal risk protection investigations if these are not necessary. Findings in relation to significant harm are clear and result in urgent action to protect children and young people.</p>	<p>The Contact Swindon project plan is achieved and implemented by Jan 2024 which will ensure contacts and referrals are signposted and MASH is able to work more appropriately in risk levels. We will see the number of Early Help assessments increase (baseline data is from December 2023).</p> <p>We will see that our regular multi-agency audits of threshold decisions show good practice, including quality of referral and effectiveness of response which means to us that partners are collaborating with shared thresholds and standards of practice.</p> <p>Our check and challenge process in MASH will show through our dip sampling, our understanding and correct application of thresholds.</p> <p>We will see sustained MASH timescales adhered to through MASH timescales measures (BRAG system).</p> <p>We will see a decrease in % of repeat contacts. Monitor re-referral rate which is low-and ensure when we cross reference with audit outcomes assessments are detailed and action taken is proportionate to need Percentage of repeat Child Protection plans to reduce from 17.5% (October 2023)</p> <p>Number of staff completing Thresholds training run through the SSP.</p>
<p>Strengthen strategic Early Intervention, Youth and Communities Board and co-develop our Early Intervention Strategy with multi-agency partners to identify priority areas of focus to reduce need in the community</p> <p>Our Early help offer to be realigned and our locality teams to be developed and implemented to support better partnership solutions at lower level of need.</p>	<p>Early Intervention, Youth and Communities Board</p>	<p>Feb 2024</p>		
<p>Multi-agency arrangements with the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) to be strengthened by reviewing threshold document and ensuring thresholds are clearly shared and understood and are appropriately responsive to need/risk. All Social workers, managers and partner agencies undertake training to understand thresholds. We will do this in series of media events and communications next year and will ensure schools are supported with this work.</p>	<p>Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Executive</p>	<p>March 2024</p>		

Refresh training and support to staff to use the joint assessments for our Homeless 16- and 17-year-olds and ensure they are supported with accommodation that meets their needs for care / support when presented.	Director of Safeguarding and support SBC	Jan 2024	All our young people aged 16/17, including care leavers are helped to find housing solutions, based on joint assessment with housing colleagues, that best meets their needs.	<p>Percentage of repeat Child Protection plans to reduce from 17.5% (October 2023).</p> <p>Number of staff completing Thresholds training run through the SSP.</p> <p>New 16/17 years old homelessness strategy signed off and in practice evidencing better joined up services.</p> <p>Audits of joint assessments show an improvement in quality and effectiveness for all age children eligible for help.</p> <p>We will see less babies entering court without a comprehensive assessment of need.</p> <p>Better identification of parents and their babies requiring statutory support through increased referrals to Early Intervention services.</p> <p>We will have a workforce that identifies neglect in all forms and is aware of the offer to support.</p> <p>Staff will be aware of impact regarding neglect for Children of all ages. We will see this through supervision and team meeting feedback.</p>
Refresh and strengthen engagement and arrangements for identifying, assessing, and responding to the needs, risks, and circumstances of unborn babies in collaboration with relevant Health and Early Intervention partners. We will do this through a new agreed protocol to share information, agree level of assessment and plan required for the parent/ family and ensure prompt action to support/ safeguard newborns.	<p>Director of Safeguarding and support SBC</p> <p>Swindon Safeguarding Partnership</p>	Apr 2024		
Develop and implement a multi-agency Neglect strategy to improve the response to our children suffering from Neglect, including introduction of effective screening tools to support identification of longer-term, cumulative impact of neglect on children and young people.	Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Executive	Mar 2024		

<p>Re-fresh our Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Board and develop and implement multi-agency strategic plan to improve the response to our children living in families where there is domestic abuse alongside a wider joined up approach to Domestic Abuse.</p> <p>Domestic abuse where identified will be directed to early intervention services in the first instance.</p>	<p>Corporate Director Children Services SBC</p> <p>Community Safety Partnership</p>	<p>Mar 2024</p>		<p>Audits show better identification of Domestic Abuse (DA) and practice relating to DA for our children and families.</p>
<p>Re-establish the Multi-agency Risk Panel (MARF) to ensure a clear strategic approach to contextualised and transitional safeguarding. Better identification and early intervention of our children who are at risk or being exploited.</p> <p>Deliver a comprehensive analysis of Risk Outside the Home in the borough through mapping and analysis.</p> <p>Redesign our offer and ensure a targeted partnership response to reduce CCE/CSE and County lines/ gang work in the borough. We will do this through the new team design and the non -case holding model we are implementing.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and Support</p> <p>Community Safety Partnership</p>	<p>Apr 2024</p>		<p>Audits show improvements in practice for our children where exploitation is prevalent.</p> <p>Better awareness of areas within the borough where children may be at harm so we can work together, with partners to disperse those areas.</p> <p>Our new youth centre and support offer will be well attended by young people of relevant ages across all wards.</p> <p>Attendance across schools will be improved in particular in years 9, 10 and 11 evident in our data returns.</p>
<p>Ensure all staff are aware of and utilise the correct thresholds for interventions with our children and families, including our child in need plans, child protection plans and instigating the Public Law Outline.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC</p>	<p>March 2024</p>		<p>Dip samples show understanding and correct application of thresholds in line with revised threshold document.</p>

2. Practice: Improve how accurately assessments identify children's needs and risks and support the framing of timely and clear plans that match children's circumstances.

What we need to do	By whom – operational leads	By when	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/evidence – How will we know we are making a difference
<p>Improve the quality of assessments so they triangulate all information and reflect impact of history on the current risks to our children.</p> <p>Strengthen quality assurance activity to provide robust evidence that the quality of practice is improving.</p> <p>Social Workers who need additional support to be offered 1-1 support and coaching through the practice leads.</p>	Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC	Apr 2024	<p>Neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse are effectively identified and responded to. Where our children need help and protection, assessments are timely, proportionate to risk and informed by research and by the historical context and significant events for each child. Senior managers have responsibility for authorising the recommended next steps.</p> <p>Our children and young people are listened to, practice is focused on their needs and experiences and influenced by their wishes and feelings, or an advocate on their behalf. They are consistently seen and seen alone by social workers.</p>	<p>The percentage of audits of assessments and plans that are graded good increases from 40% to 80%.</p> <p>Percentage of repeat Child Protection plans to reduce from 17.5% (October 2023).</p> <p>The percentage of audits of assessments and plans that are graded Inadequate decreases (baseline October 2023).</p> <p>Number and percentage of re-referrals to Children's Social Care decreases.</p>
<p>Strengthen the quality of plans across the service so that they are comprehensive and Specific Measurable, Achievable Realistic Timebound (SMART) and focussed on driving sustained progress for children and young people.</p> <p>Strengthen quality assurance activity to provide robust evidence that the quality of practice is improving.</p> <p>Social Workers who need additional support to be offered 1-1 support and coaching</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC</p> <p>Director of Corporate Parenting SBC</p>	May 2024	<p>Help and protection for our children and young people is sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race, and sexual orientation.</p> <p>Decisions to look after children and young people are timely and made only when it is in their best interests.</p>	<p>Multi-agency neglect strategy signed off.</p> <p>Increase in usage of Neglect screening tool– evidenced through dip sampling of neglect cases.</p> <p>Number of staff completing training on Neglect increases.</p> <p>Number of staff completing training on DA increases.</p> <p>Publication and sign off the new Domestic Abuse Violence Against Women and Girls strategy.</p>

<p>All staff to recognise the impact of long-term neglect and create effective plans to address. Training on neglect and the cumulative effects of neglect delivered to all partners.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC</p> <p>Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Executive</p>	<p>Jun 2024</p>	<p>All children and young people in need of our services have a plan setting out the help that is offered. All children who need our protection are subject to a child protection plan that clearly identifies the work that will be offered to their family and the necessary changes to be achieved within appropriate timescales for our child or young person.</p>	<p>Numbers of staff undertaking training in motivational interviewing, and Family Safeguarding recording increases.</p> <p>Number of group supervisions increases</p> <p>Quality of Group Supervision increases</p> <p>Family Safeguarding Model Phase 2 is embedded within Quality Assurance Team.</p>
<p>All staff to recognise the impact of domestic abuse on children and create effective plans to address;</p> <p>Reinstate online mandatory Domestic Abuse training for all staff.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC</p> <p>Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Executive</p>	<p>Jun 2024</p>	<p>Our children and young people are in good physical and mental health or are being helped to improve their health and their health needs are identified.</p>	
<p>Embed the key elements of Family Safeguarding Strengths Based model of practice across the service, including motivational interviewing, cycle of change and group supervision Practice Manual. To be developed – identifying inclusion/exclusion criteria; Comms supporting materials to be developed in line with the model for service users, staff, and partner agencies; All adult practitioner roles recruited to.</p> <p>Work with conference chairs to embed Family Safeguarding values, Motivational Interviewing skills, and developing family and help-led plans.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and support SBC</p>	<p>Jun 2024</p>		
<p>Ensure all plans for our children, including Child in Need, Child Protection and Children we look after are timely and effectively, capture their specific needs, including physical health, mental health, educational needs, and identity needs and include contingency planning.</p>	<p>Director of Corporate parenting SBC</p> <p>Director of Safeguarding and support SBC.</p>	<p>Jun 2024</p>		

3. Practice: Improve the regularity and effectiveness of management oversight across all services

What we need to do	By whom – operational leads	By when	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/evidence – How will we know we are making a difference
Review the structure of the Directorate Leadership Team to ensure there is sufficient capacity and capability to lead and manage the service.	Corporate Director children Services SBC	Apr 2024	The service structure and pathways are enablers to achieving good outcomes with children and young people and support staff to undertake their role efficiently and effectively.	With the case files of our children audited each month, including following moderation, the number of good or outstanding audits is increasing, with number of inadequate audits decreasing.
Embed new supervision policy to improve supervision and management oversight, ensuring that those working directly with our children and young people receive clear direction, support and can be reflective about their work. Continue to improve the quality of supervision so that there is evidence to demonstrate that plans are being robustly progressed and are outcome focused.	Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jun 2024	Management oversight of practice, including practice scrutiny by senior managers, is established, systematic and demonstrably used to improve the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children and young people. Supervision routinely provides high quality support and challenge and is a safe space for workers to reflect on their practice. It ensures that workers have the knowledge and skills to ensure they undertake their role confidently and competently to ensure that our children and families receive the best possible service.	Strengthened management oversight evident at all levels. Thematic audit on Supervision and Management Oversight completed every 3 months and shows improvement. Timescales for Child Protection practice. Timescales for CLA reviews % of staff who have a recorded monthly supervision increases.
Ensure decision making for our children is effectively independently reviewed, and disputes are resolved within proscribed timescales. Ensure Child Protection chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers are tackling drift and delay.	Head of Quality Assurance SBC	Jun 2024		% of allocated children who have an up-to-date supervision completed on their record in line with the supervision policy increases in every team - this can only report monthly/3 monthly until BI (Business Intelligence) solution in place and reporting amended in line with supervision policy.

<p>Improve monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay, Embed performance board, and updated Quality Assurance Framework</p> <p>Review and re-launch of the Quality Assurance Framework to provide robust assurance that the quality of practice is improving.</p>	<p>Head of Quality Assurance Children's Social Care SBC</p>	<p>Apr 2024</p>	<p>All new starters will have a meaningful induction on joining Children's Services to ensure that our workforce understand what is expected of them (Practice Standards) and what support is available to them.</p>	<p>Our audits of quality of plans shows improvement in change for children and that the plans address issues raised in assessment and within partnership working.</p> <p>Our data regarding evidencing Childrens' caseloads per team meets the agreed target for each team within the next year as we drive demand down safely.</p>
<p>Build upon the implementation of the new quality assurance framework in measuring the quality of practice, in terms of data and qualitative sources, and include the voices of our children and families. Ensure learning from audits is translated into effective training and development opportunities, including training sessions, individual coaching, and mentoring.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding Director of Corporate Parenting</p>	<p>Jun 2024</p>	<p>Swindon children's social care knows itself well, is a learning organisation and can demonstrate evidence of practice that is informed, modified, and sustainably improved by feedback, research, and intelligence about the quality of services and the experience of children, young people and families who use them.</p>	<p>We will see our Performance and Practice Boards effectively hold all staff to account and see KPIs in some areas of concern improve over the next 12 months.</p>
<p>Managers to ensure all social workers are working to the Swindon Practice Standards and our young people devised 'contract of expectations'.</p> <p>Embed the Management Practice Standards.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and support SBC</p> <p>Director of Corporate Parenting SBC</p>	<p>Jul 2024</p>	<p>Our Children in Care Council, Raise Your Voice and Family Advisory Board are regularly consulted on how to improve service delivery and are part of our DFE improvement board through reference group feedback links.</p>	
<p>Our managers to ensure social workers have caseloads that enable them to support our children and families effectively. Ensure appropriate, planned, and consistent transfer of our children between teams. We will do this via weekly Child in Need panels held, regular case work allocation and transfer meetings and looking with colleagues In Early Intervention to ensure weekly step downs are in place for all teams.</p>	<p>Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC</p> <p>Director of Corporate Parenting SBC</p>	<p>Jul 2024</p>		

4. People: Ensure children have the opportunity to build a relationship of trust with a single consistent social worker, by improving the stability of the social care workforce

What we need to do	By whom – operational leads	By when	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/evidence – How will we know we are making a difference
Further embed the vision for Children's Services, to ensure a culture of continuous improvement and the prioritisation of improving outcomes for children and families.	Corporate Director Children's Services SBC	July 2024	<p>We will see progress on our improvement journey through feedback from staff and our children, and it will be reflected in the stability of our workforce and the quality of practice.</p> <p>Our staff will tell us Swindon is a place of choice to work.</p>	<p>We will see workforce stability improve and retention of staff increase.</p> <p>We will have over 85% of our staff permanent in children Services in key front-line roles.</p> <p>Children who we work with will feed back to staff that they feel listened to, have good stable relationships with their social worker.</p>
<p>Improve stability of social work staff by increasing the number of permanent experienced social workers employed in Swindon; - We will do this through relentless advertisement of our offer to staff, our retention package, our training and development.</p> <p>We will ensure that we are communicating wider across the region regarding our improvement work and our innovative practice such as Family Safeguarding and our Youth bids.</p>	Corporate Director Children's Services SBC	Oct 2024	<p>Careful monitoring of workloads and oversight of the impact of wider systems on working conditions for practitioners ensure that our practitioners have the capacity and ability to develop meaningful relationships with children, families, and care experienced young people.</p> <p>The impact of any systems change is professionally managed, with a sustained focus on the experience of children and families through experts by experience members involved in change work at all levels.</p>	<p>We will Increase in the proportion of permanent workforce – target is minimum of 85%.</p> <p>We will reduce our average caseloads according to team targets which are agreed by managers and reviewed via case load weighting systems.</p> <p>We will Increase the average length of time social workers and managers stay in Swindon to 24 months plus.</p> <p>We will reduce the prevalence of staff sickness through a corporate emotional wellbeing offer which aims to work to minimise staff burnout and stress often found in our service area.</p>

Reinvigorate our Workforce Strategy and increase our recruitment and retention activity.	Corporate Director Children's Services SBC	Mar 2024	<p>The local authority social care workforce is sufficient, suitably qualified and accredited to deliver high-quality services to children and their families. (For more information about accreditation, see the national assessment and accreditation system (NAAS)). Managers and practitioners are experienced, effectively trained and supervised and the quality of their practice improves the lives of vulnerable children, young people, and families. There is effective organisational support for the training and professional development of social workers, personal advisers, and managers. Leaders and managers have created an environment where good social work can flourish, and this is evident in the overall quality and impact of social work.</p>	Number of ASYEs who stay in Swindon 1 year post completion.
Improve the reach, availability and effectiveness of the training and development offer so staff are confident in all areas of practice and work in collaboration with all teams and partners.	Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Mar 2024		
Refresh and relaunch our induction arrangements for our new starters so they receive a comprehensive orientation and introduction to Swindon's vision, teams, practice, and management standards. We have commenced this, and staff are valuing this as we ask for feedback on the work to date.	Corporate Director Children's Services SBC	Mar 2024		
Development of Academy and comprehensive career development pathway to support social work retention and progression. We will need to seek investment to ensure we can grow this academy across the council for better joined up training, development, and job roles with adult services.	Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC	Aug 2024		

5. Place: Increase the number and range of foster homes and children's homes and other placements the local authority has available, to help ensure that children live in stable homes that are well matched to their needs.

What we need to do	By whom – operational leads	By when	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/evidence – How will we know we are making a difference
Develop a new sufficiency strategy and include a detailed needs analysis of all our Children we Look After (CLA) which includes projected needs over the next five years to ensure a better sufficiency of homes where our children can live, so children that we look after are able to stay connected to their schools, communities, and families where this is in their interest.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jan 2025	Our Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Sufficiency Strategy set out clear local priorities for our Children we Look After. The placement of our children and young people into homes and families that meet their needs is effective because there is a comprehensive range and choice available.	<p>We will see an increase in number of in-house foster care households to 25 per year for the next 3 years.</p> <p>We will see an Increase the number of our children moving from residential care into family homes – foster care.</p> <p>We will see an Increase in number of our children who stay in homes longer - long term stability.</p> <p>We will see a decrease in the number of times children must move home in their care episode span.</p> <p>Sufficiency plan reflects the numbers of level 3 Foster carers supporting assessed high need children locally.</p>
Increase the leadership and management oversight for any of our children placed in an unregistered setting.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jan 2024	Our children will, where safe live in the local area or not more than 20 miles from Swindon while being looked after, so they retain ties with their families and communities and can remain at the same school if appropriate.	
We will re-publish our revised guidance for our staff to ensure there is a clear understanding of what is a placement unregulated by Ofsted and what is an unregistered placement.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jan 2024	The recruitment, assessment, training, support, supervision, review, and retention of foster carers including kinship carers and as appropriate Special Guardians, ensure that families approved are safe and sufficient in number to care for children and young people with a wide range of needs. This enables our children to be placed with their brothers and sisters and have contact with their birth family and friends when this is in their best interest.	

Strengthen contract monitoring of Independent Fostering Agencies/residential and supported accommodation.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Apr 2024	<p>We have a greater choice of appropriately regulated residential homes and supported accommodation for our children and young people who are unable to live in a family setting through our Sufficiency plan agreed in October 2023 Cabinet.</p> <p>Our children and young people benefit from stable and effective living arrangements and there are less placement breakdowns .</p>	
Ensure all our children in care are appropriately matched with their foster carer or residential placement/supported accommodation.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Apr 2024		
Increase the numbers of specialist foster carers who can care for our children with complex and trauma related needs by using the level of funding allowance to ensure level of training and skill is reflected in Foster Carer's allowances. We aim to have 10 high level carers in 2024 and 2025 the same increase.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	July 2024		
Increase the number of foster carers recruited by Swindon, building on momentum caused by an increase in the fostering allowances in Summer 2023, and ensuring this is a corporate priority.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jan 2025		
Ensure our children with complex needs are placed in accommodation that meets their needs, rather than placements that are available.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jan 2025		
Ensure that our care experienced young people can access suitable, secure accommodation that meets their needs. We will ensure that we continue to build a wider choice of homes through better engagement with local providers in Swindon as well as developing local homes via our Capital Board for investment. We are looking at social value contracts with local tradesmen/builders who can assist us with developing small properties we can use to look after our children who require care.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jan 2025		

6. Practice: Improve the quality of practice for children needing permanence.

What we need to do	By whom – operational leads	By when	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/evidence – How will we know we are making a difference
Maintain the quality of Public Law Outline practice	Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC	Dec 2023	<p>All plans and decisions for our children and young people are clearly recorded, are outcome focused and regularly reviewed to ensure that they improve permanent outcomes for children. Action is taken where the circumstances for children do not change, and the risk of harm or actual harm remains or intensifies.</p> <p>Children and young people looked after, those returning home and those moving to or living in permanent homes outside of their immediate birth family have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.</p> <p>Our children and young people are helped to live in permanent homes or families without unnecessary delay. The development of safe, stable, and secure relationships with adults is central to planning for their futures.</p> <p>Care is used only if this is in our child's best interests. Our children and young people are safely and successfully returned home, and where this is not possible, permanent plans are made for them to live away from the family home.</p>	PLO measures.
Strengthen senior management footprint on our children's records to evidence decision making about children coming into care, initiation of Public Law Outline (PLO) and care proceedings, permanence planning and choice of accommodation options. Only Directors can chair panels.	Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC	Jan 2024		Number of our children looked after in permanent arrangements increases i.e. long-term Foster Care/ Placed for adoption/ Special Guardianship Orders.
Improve understanding of Permanence throughout the social care workforce, to ensure it is embedded from the front door onwards. We will do this through our new policy and practice board which has been recently introduced. The recent tracker in place continues to support early decisions on care planning and matching.	Director of Safeguarding and Support SBC Director of Corporate Parenting	Jun 2024		<p>Audits of practice with children subject to significant harm improve.</p> <p>We will see an increase in the number of children we look after will be in permanent homes i.e. long-term Foster Care/ Placed for adoption/ Special Guardianship Orders.</p> <p>Our audit dip sample of quality of permanence planning will show our children are placed quicker and remain with carers</p>
Improve the understanding of and use of Early Permanence for our children.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jun 2024		Children we look after have a plan for permanence within 4 months of coming into care evident in Childcare review data. We aim to see less escalation of this issue raised by IRO's in the next year.

Ensure all our children have a plan for permanence within four months of coming into care.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Mar 2024	Where the plan for a child or young person of ours is to return home, there is evidence of purposeful work to help their family to change so it is safe for our child to return.	Increased number of Special Guardianship Order arrangements.
Develop and implement a reunification framework to assess and support our children to return home where it is safe for them to do so.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jun 2024	Kinship care is actively considered for our children where appropriate	Reduced number of children being cared for by Swindon Borough Council.
Ensure effective support is available for Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) carers and adoptive parents. Our Special Guardianship Order policy, agreed at Cabinet in Dec 2023 will support carers financially to choose this option where it best suits our child and is agreed by all.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jul 2024	Adoption is considered for all our children who are unable to return home or to their birth families and who need a permanent alternative home. There is an appropriate use of concurrent and parallel planning, so that our children can live with an adoptive family at the earliest opportunity, who meet their needs.	Increased % of applications to revoke legal orders.
Continue to ensure that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service 'champion' the needs and rights of our children and young people and contribute to the progression of robust care and permanency planning.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Jul 2024	Early Planning and case management results in appropriate permanent placements, without delay or unnecessary moves.	% of our children new into care placed over 20 miles from reduces by 5% each year between 2024 and 2027.
Strengthen IRO challenge on issues which impact on our children and young people such as the suitability of accommodation, separation of siblings, drift, and delay.			Our children and young people are effectively prepared for, and carefully matched with, a permanent home. Their wishes and feelings are understood and influence the decisions about where they live.	
Ensure there is sufficient support and provision in place to meet the demand for high quality life story work for our children and young people and increase the effectiveness of direct work done with our children, and ensure purposeful visits are done in response to need where necessary.	Director of Corporate Parenting SBC	Sept 2024		

7. Process: Improve the reliability and effectiveness of systems to record data and records about children and how well these are used to understand and support improvements in practice and services

What we need to do	By whom – operational leads	By when	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/evidence – How will we know we are making a difference
Improve the quality of management information so we understand the profile of need and risk amongst our children and their families, through the development of better reporting platform which provides live data.	Chief Digital Officer	Apr 2024	The local authority, through performance management and monitoring, has an accurate and systematically updated understanding of its effectiveness and uses this to drive improvement. Management oversight of practice, including practice scrutiny by senior managers, is established, systematic and used clearly to improve the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children and young people. Management information improves - All social workers, practitioners and managers are confident in how to use management information to proactively manage operational performance. Usage of Care Director improves and staff report being more confident. More user-friendly data reports are routinely produced from live data and enable managers to easily identify areas for improvement and drill down to child level data. We can evidence our improvement to Ofsted and the DFE through the Delivery Board and our Improvement Board.	Accurate data presented in a more readable format. Project Management support in place. Better live data and reporting across Children's Social Care and Early Help. Six weekly reports to delivery board. Up to date monthly performance scorecard data for each team/service are in place. Managers at all levels are using performance data effectively to improve practice delivery in their team/service area as evidenced in performance meetings.
Improve the quality of recording on the Integrated Children's System (ICS) by social workers and managers through floor walkers, mandatory training, and the development of and launch of refreshed recording standards. These will set out clear expectations about what excellent quality children's records and reports look like and including 'Language that Cares' guidance.	Director of Safeguarding Director of Corporate Parenting	Apr 2024		Recording standards are refreshed, are known, and used by all staff to ensure that records are accurate, timely and will help children understand their social care journey as evidenced through audit activity.
Allocate additional corporate resources with dedicated project management support to strengthen strategic and operational planning for the improvement and transformation activity. We are also working with the DFE (Department for Education) to ensure we have the necessary infrastructure and capacity to deliver workstream plans.	Chief Executive Officer	Jan 2024		Transformation team in place and transformation plan finalised and signed off. Post-inspection, Corporate Leads aligned to the Transformation Programme..

Implement the Corporate Data Strategy with increased investment and development of central reporting functions. This will include Power BI reports with the capacity to drill down to child level data. This is to be achieved by additional investment already being used to expedite this work and will allow our analysis of data to be sharper for service planning and delivery.	Head of Performance Data, and Insight SBC	Mar 2024		
Ensure that governance and reporting arrangements are in place for the Improvement Board so that the Transformation Plan is driven and scrutinised effectively.	Corporate Director Children Services/Chief Executive SBC	Jan 24		
Procure and migrate to a new ICS, replacing Care Director, ensuring the service is involved in deciding the detailed specification required.	Chief Digital Officer	Jul 2025		

