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# Strategic Neighbourhood Forums

## January 2020

Childrens Services our current position  
and planned developments for 2020

# May 2019 - Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

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- An unannounced three week program of inspection.
- Week one off site – including - performance data, auditing, telephone interviews, review of self-assessment, developing initial lines of enquiry.
- Week two and three on site– 4 HMI, 1 QA, plus 2 Education HMI for two days and 1 Regulatory Inspector for one day.
- Majority of time spent in services/teams reviewing frontline work across out of hours, MASH, duty, safeguarding, early help, looked after, fostering, adoption, leaving care, virtual school.
- Case tracking, file auditing, 1:1 with frontline workers and first line managers, data interrogation, meeting with young people and foster carers etc.
- Formal report and four judgements given.

# Judgements

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Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good

# High level summary

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- Initial progress had been slow.
- More recently senior leadership have supported a much strengthened 'whole-council' commitment to improving the quality and impact of services for children.
- Also more widely within the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and political leadership.
- The result a notable increase in the pace and effectiveness of service development.
- Leaders have an improved understanding of how well services are working for children and of their key priorities.

# Some important improvements had been made

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- The scale and effectiveness of early help services have been strengthened through a new locality- based model that is now serving most children well.
- A new multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) is ensuring that referrals about children for whom there are safeguarding concerns are almost always dealt with quickly and appropriately.
- An 'edge of care' team works intensively with families to ensure that children only come into care when they need to.
- However, much progress, particularly in services for children in care, is very new and so impact is inevitably limited.
- The local authority is not providing the consistently good services for children that it aspires to.

# What needed to improve

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- Timeliness of achieving permanence for children in care.
- The challenge provided by senior leaders, team managers, IROs and conference chairs about the pace and quality of social work and placements for children in care.

Response - Focused actions to review all Looked After Plans – Placement Sufficiency and revised commissioning and brokerage arrangements. Strengthened IRO service and performance management.

- How consistently children's wishes and feelings are used to inform assessments and plans.

Response – focused training and development activity and enhanced engagement with voice of the child

- Children's experience of being able to develop a relationship with a consistent social worker who visits them regularly and makes sure their plans are progressed.

Response – targeted recruitment and retention activity has reduced agency staffing from 35/40% to 10/15% and improved stability.

# Areas of focus over the past 12 months

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- A focus on a locality and partnership approach
- Move from the piloting of Team Around the School to full roll out – now circa 60 school engaged
- Further embed the Early Help panels in each locality
- Launched and further development of the Early Help Access Point – now fully operational and clear impact can be evidenced
- Launched and further development of the MASH – now fully operational and again clear impact can be evidenced
- Effectively and appropriately managing demand - 12 month rolling data evidences positive progress (exception = Looked After numbers)

# Areas of focus over the past 12 months - continued

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- Embedding our model of practice Signs of Safety
- Work /Case Load – now reduced and stable
- Stabilise staffing, improve recruitment and retention – reliance on agency now reduced
- Developed/improved routes into Social Work
- Management training and development.
- In depth reviews of additional areas including Child in Need, Pre Proceedings, Fostering and Placement Sufficiency.



# Areas of focus for 2020

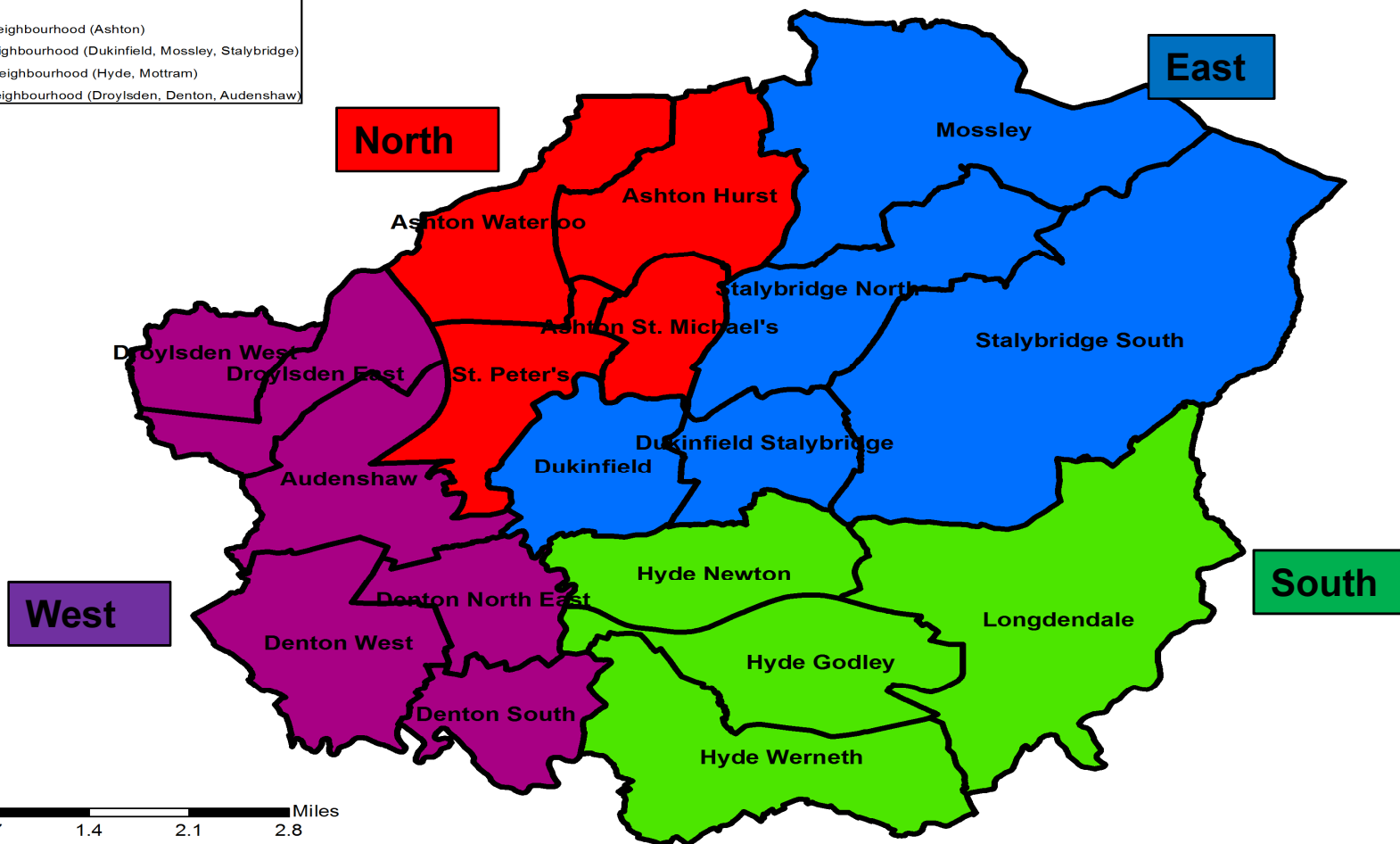
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System now more stable, but 2020 will see a continued focus on areas already targeted in 2019 and additionally a specific focus on areas including -

- Work Force Development
- Consistency in quality
- Complex Safeguarding
- Children in Need
- Children at the “cusp of care”
- Looked After Children - including Fostering, placement sufficiency, permanency

# A locality Approach

## Tameside Neighbourhoods



0 0.35 0.7 1.4 2.1 2.8 Miles

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Author: Policy and Communications

# Looked After Children Challenges (1)

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- **To reduce the need for Local Authority Care, enhance prevention and improve progress through Care.**
- Drivers of current Looked After numbers include:
  - Impact of austerity. National and regional rises (particularly in older cohorts)
  - The impact of an Inadequate judgement - increasing referrals and lowering thresholds
  - Our previous notably low levels of LAC, Child Protection and Early Help activity
  - Entrenched and previously unaddressed issues leading to family breakdown- particularly neglect and domestic abuse.
  - Poor historical response from agencies, leading to significant “legacy” issues
  - A necessary period of focusing on getting basic statutory requirements in place
  - Capacity, stability and quality of workforce
  - A need for more practical support for families and children throughout the continuum of need- to prevent escalation.
  - No respite provision as an alternative to taking children into care
  - A lack of suitable provision locally to meet increased needs- to much out of Borough activity
  - Permanency planning which requires improvement

# Looked After Children Challenges (2)

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- Stabilise current / move to permanence (incl. re-profile)
  - We have too many children in expensive placements, and too many out of the borough. This is a combination of the age profile, complexity and level of need of our LAC cohort and a lack of suitable placements locally
  - Not enough provision for those on the cusp of family or placement breakdown- respite
  - Need for more and better local fostering placements (including specialist fostering and a creating a fostering friendly Borough)
  - A need for better mental health support to deal with the impact of trauma
  - A need for children to be able to stay in the Borough to be assessed and supported to go home wherever possible- assessment unit
  - Not enough support for families and children in their homes and neighbourhoods
- Step down (safely)
  - Too many children remain in care too long and only leave care at 18
  - A need to properly resource the effort to get children out of care earlier where safe and needs can be met
  - A need for a range of step down options- Special Guardianship Orders, fostering step up/ step down



# What is required

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**A multi faceted and coordinated approach is required, in order to safely and appropriately reduce the need for Local Authority Care. To stabilise the current cohort, progress children's through to permanency more effectively, step children down where appropriate and provide for a range of placements to best meet children's assessed needs. The 7 projects support these objectives as shown below.**

# 7 sustainability projects

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## **1 – EARLY HELP & PREVENTION AT A NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL**

- Create multi-disciplinary neighbourhood teams providing wrap around support for children and families

## **2 – FAMILY INTERVENTION SERVICE**

- Establish a Family Support Service to provide practical support and diversionary work to prevent admissions – de-escalating risk, across the continuum of need Early Help – Child in Need – Child Protection – Looked After Children, plus psychological support.

## **3 – TEAM AROUND THE SCHOOL PLUS**

- Speed up and enhance the role out the current Team Around the School model to all schools, colleges and nurseries

## **4 – DUTY / LOCALITY RESTRUCTURE**

- Stage 1. Restructure the duty and locality teams to remove a step in the process  
Stage 2. Move to true locality working with teams based in each of the four neighbourhoods holding a neighbourhood based cohort / caseload



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## **5 – POSITIVE FUTURES (RESPITE / ASSESSMENT)**

- Deliver a respite / short break facility, an assessment unit and emergency/short break fostering, supported by an outreach team/key workers. Objective to prevent placement breakdown, and to allow children to remain at home and avoid admission into care. Works alongside Edge of Care and Family Support Service – target 11years plus.

## **6 – FOSTERING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT**

- Increase the number of foster carers through a new model tailored to current need, cohort demographics and an improved payment and support model. Increase number of children with more complex needs fostered in Tameside

## **7 – PLACEMENTS REVIEW & SUFFICIENCY**

- Review all placements to ensure children are in the right placement, at the best possible cost for the appropriate period of time – whilst at all times maintaining safeguarding duty. Develop placement sufficiency, commissioning, procurement, QA and contract management

# Timeline

	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	Apr 20	May 20	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sept 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21
1: Early Help			D	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	I	I	I	I	I	I	S	S	S
2: Family Support Service	D		P	P	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
3: Team Around School	D	P	I	I	I	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
4: Duty/Locality	D	P	P	P	P	I	I	I	I	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
5: Positive Futures	D					P	P	I	I	I	I	I	I	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
6: Fostering	D			P	P	P	I	I	I	I	I	I	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
7: Placements	D	I	I	I	I	S	S	S												

D = Decision. P = Planning. I = Implementation. S = Cost Avoidance/Savings.