

Our writing to the child journey

Why we incorporated this style of writing

As part of our continued road to excellence and the child being at the centre of our practice we started our journey of writing to the child in May 2020, by requiring all our children and young people to have a three-month case summary on each child's case notes, which is written to the child. The three-month update would set out the key actions, decisions and things that had taken place over this period building a comprehensive narrative for the future adult the child would become. We have further developed writing to the child within other reports as set out below.

Practice principles and standards

Child at the centre

The child should always be at the centre of case recording.

- Case records document the day to day life of children and young people.
- It tells their individual story, including the strengths within their family, the areas where support is required, and any concerns raised.
- Case recording evidences the child's wishes and feelings and the views of their parents and carers.
- It is essential for hypothesising, analysing and planning, forming the basis for the child's chronology, assessments and any formal reports written.
- Case recording assists in making sense of the available information, ultimately impacting on decision making, asking what is going on within this family? Have we got the right plan for the child?
- Record the child's wishes and feelings explicitly and say how these views were obtained.
- Record the child's own words or upload their pictures, photographs or written documents where possible.
- Ensure observations for younger children, or those children without verbal communication.
- Ultimately, the child may wish to access their information in the future. What would they read? Would it tell an accurate, clear and coherent story?
- For some children in care, reading their case records gives them information they may not otherwise have had, it can help them understand and piece together their life experiences.

Our journey

Stage One - Planning

- Reviewed research on writing to child i.e. key learning issues/ benefits for children and families and engagement
- Pride in Practice Conference presentation by Jenny Molloy on 4th November 2019. Jenny spent a lot of her childhood in care and regularly gives talks and is called on by the government bodies to advise on the care and fostering of children.
- Adopted a Learning Approach, which was promoted by senior managers.
- Considered the types of practice which needed to be focused on to achieve the proposed changes.
- Explored how practice approaches would complement / support managers and cases workers to write to the child.
- Considered what was likely to work well and what wouldn't work so well.
- Approach was piloted within children in care and feedback was gathered from young people through their personal advisors

Step Two – Implementation

- A cultural organisational change was needed to achieve the change to achieve the required outcomes for the development of writing to the child
- A timescale for implementation was agreed. Following the implementation of the three-month update, the second phase began on the 12th October 2020 with an expectation that all key documents set out in the practice guidance would be written to the child by the 20th December.
- Task and Finish Groups were set up to look at implementing the model to share, discuss, review and develop practice.
- Looked at the child's journey through the service and what key documents workers used.
- Selected key documents which would be used in the initial stages of the implementation.
- Writing to the Child guidance was produced.
- Managers and Quality Assurance processes had a critical role in developing writing to the child and this being implemented across services.
- Mandatory writing to child training based on specific issues identified in work put in place for all managers and workers. Virtual practice forums setting out what was expected was delivered to practitioners to support implementation (three-month update May 20) and writing to the child (October and November 2020)
- Please note Children and Family Wellbeing Services are in the early stages of their implementation of Writing to the Child, however they will be following the same principles, but will have their own matrix of documents which will need to be referred to within those service areas.

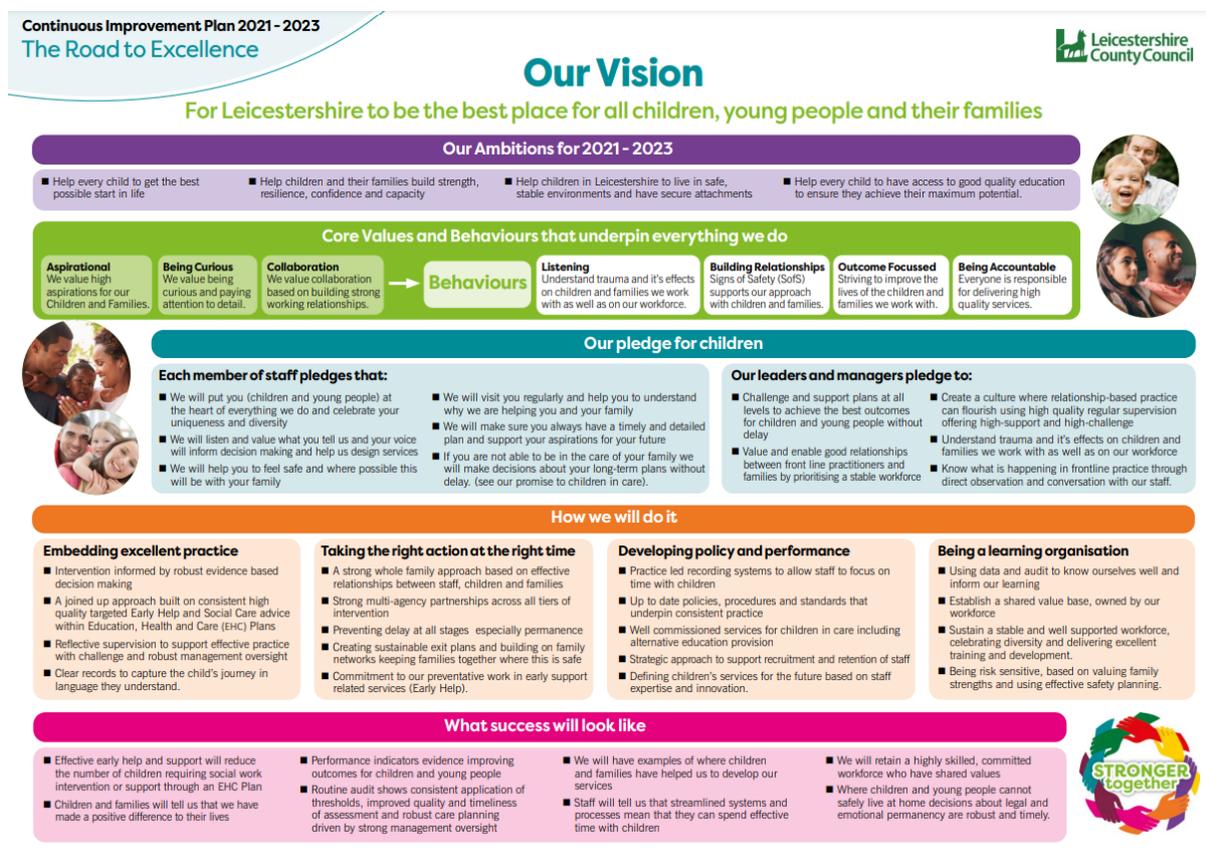
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Step Two – Review

- A review of the implementation was held, with regular Task and Finish meetings take place, looking at the impact, consistency, what has worked well, what area's need to improve. Feedback was sought from practitioners and managers.
- Further updated guidance was produced in April 2021 following the review to assist workers in ensuring more consistency with the application to practice.

Step Three – Continuous learning cycle

- Writing to the child will continue to be reviewed within the Practice Development Groups and remains central to our Road to Excellence.
- We will formally review progress 6 months after the launch of the updated Writing to the Child Guidance (April 2021).
- Review of the guidance will take place annually and be updated.
- Audit activity will inform us on the progress of the implementation and identify any areas of development.



Continuous Improvement Plan 2021 - 2023
The Road to Excellence

Our Vision
For Leicestershire to be the best place for all children, young people and their families

Our Ambitions for 2021 - 2023

- Help every child to get the best possible start in life
- Help children and their families build strength, resilience, confidence and capacity
- Help children in Leicestershire to live in safe, stable environments and have secure attachments
- Help every child to have access to good quality education to ensure they achieve their maximum potential.

Core Values and Behaviours that underpin everything we do

Aspirational
We value high aspirations for our Children and Families.

Being Curious
We value being curious and paying attention to detail.

Collaboration
We value collaboration based on building strong working relationships.

Behaviours

Listening
Understand trauma and it's effects on children and families we work with as well as on our workforce.

Building Relationships
Signs of Safety (SoS) supports our approach with children and families.

Outcome Focussed
Striving to improve the lives of the children and families we work with.

Being Accountable
Everyone is responsible for delivering high quality services.

Our pledge for children

Each member of staff pledges that:

- We will put you (children and young people) at the heart of everything we do and celebrate your uniqueness and diversity
- We will listen and value what you tell us and your voices will inform decision making and help us design services
- We will help you to feel safe and where possible this will be with your family
- We will visit you regularly and help you to understand why we are helping you and your family
- We will make sure you always have a timely and detailed plan and support your aspirations for your future
- If you are not able to be in the care of your family we will make decisions about your long-term plans without delay. (see our promise to children in care).

Our leaders and managers pledge to:

- Challenge and support plans at all levels to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people without delay
- Value and enable good relationships between front line practitioners and families by prioritising a stable workforce
- Create a culture where relationship-based practice can flourish using high quality regular supervision offering high-support and high-challenge
- Understand trauma and it's effects on children and families we work with as well as on our workforce
- Know what is happening in frontline practice through direct observation and conversation with our staff.

How we will do it

Embedding excellent practice

- Intervention informed by robust evidence based decision making
- A joined up approach built on consistent high quality targeted Early Help and Social Care advice within Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans
- Reflective supervision to support effective practice with challenge and robust management oversight
- Clear records to capture the child's journey in language they understand.

Taking the right action at the right time

- A strong whole family approach based on effective relationships between staff, children and families
- Strong multi-agency partnerships across all tiers of intervention
- Preventing delay at all stages especially permanence
- Creating sustainable exit plans and building on family networks keeping families together where this is safe
- Commitment to our preventative work in early support related services (Early Help).

Developing policy and performance

- Practice led recording systems to allow staff to focus on time with children
- Up to date policies, procedures and standards that underpin consistent practice
- Well commissioned services for children in care including alternative education provision
- Strategic approach to support recruitment and retention of staff
- Defining children's services for the future based on staff expertise and innovation.

Being a learning organisation

- Using data and audit to know ourselves well and inform our learning
- Establish a shared value base, owned by our workforce
- Sustain a stable and well supported workforce, celebrating diversity and delivering excellent training and development.
- Being risk sensitive, based on valuing family strengths and using effective safety planning.

What success will look like

- Effective early help and support will reduce the number of children requiring social work intervention or support through an EHC Plan
- Children and families will tell us that we have made a positive difference to their lives
- Performance indicators evidence improving outcomes for children and young people
- Routine audit shows consistent application of thresholds, improved quality and timeliness of assessment and robust care planning driven by strong management oversight
- We will have examples of where children and families have helped us to develop our services
- Staff will tell us that streamlined systems and processes mean that they can spend effective time with children
- We will retain a highly skilled, committed workforce who have shared values
- Where children and young people cannot safely live at home decisions about legal and emotional permanency are robust and timely.

STRONGER together

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