



# Improvement Plan

2021-2023

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE, EARLY HELP AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Version 1.1 - Aug-Dec '21

# Introduction

This Improvement Plan outlines our roadmap for improving the lived experiences of children, young people and families over the next three years. Whilst ambitious, we are confident in achieving these outcomes if we retain a strong improvement focus.

As we achieve key milestones, this plan will evolve. We will use this plan to help us to drive improvements for children at pace. It is through dialogue with our children, young people and families and staff that we can ensure the outcomes we work towards remain relevant.

Michael Marks, Executive Director (Children & Public Health)

## Purpose of this Plan

This plan provides a high-level overview of how our service is delivering against key outcomes. This plan is based on our Self-Evaluation of June 2020 and OFSTED recommendations from our most recent inspection in July 2019. Delivering against these priorities will lead to an improved service and improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

The overall lead for the plan is the Director of Children's Services. Governance for this plan rests with the Children's Services Improvement Board. Progress is reported and scrutiny offered at the Children's Services Performance Board, Cabinet and Southend Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP).

# How our plans fit together



## People at the Heart

At the heart of all our plans and effort is the Children, Young People and Families who use our services. We do this through aligning our plans, keeping these people at the heart of what we do



## Transforming Together

Driving positive change throughout our Borough, Children's Services is a key part of our wider 2050 ambitions. Children's Services is committed to creating a Southend-on-Sea we can call our Pride and Joy.



## Continual Improvement

We are committed to continually improving our approach through working closely with children, young people, families and professionals. Together we can co-design a strategy which supports our wider ambition.



## Voice of Professionals

Listening to the voice of our staff is critical if our plans are to succeed. Working together is what will achieve our ambitions for Children's Services



## Co-Production

Connecting with children, young people and families across the Borough to ensure they are at the centre of our plans for improvement



## Looking Outside

With a close eye on Local and National Data, we will take inspiration from other Local Authorities and Organisations and strive for better



## Highest Standards

We will use our quality assurance processes and inspection findings to insist on the highest standards are delivered throughout our service

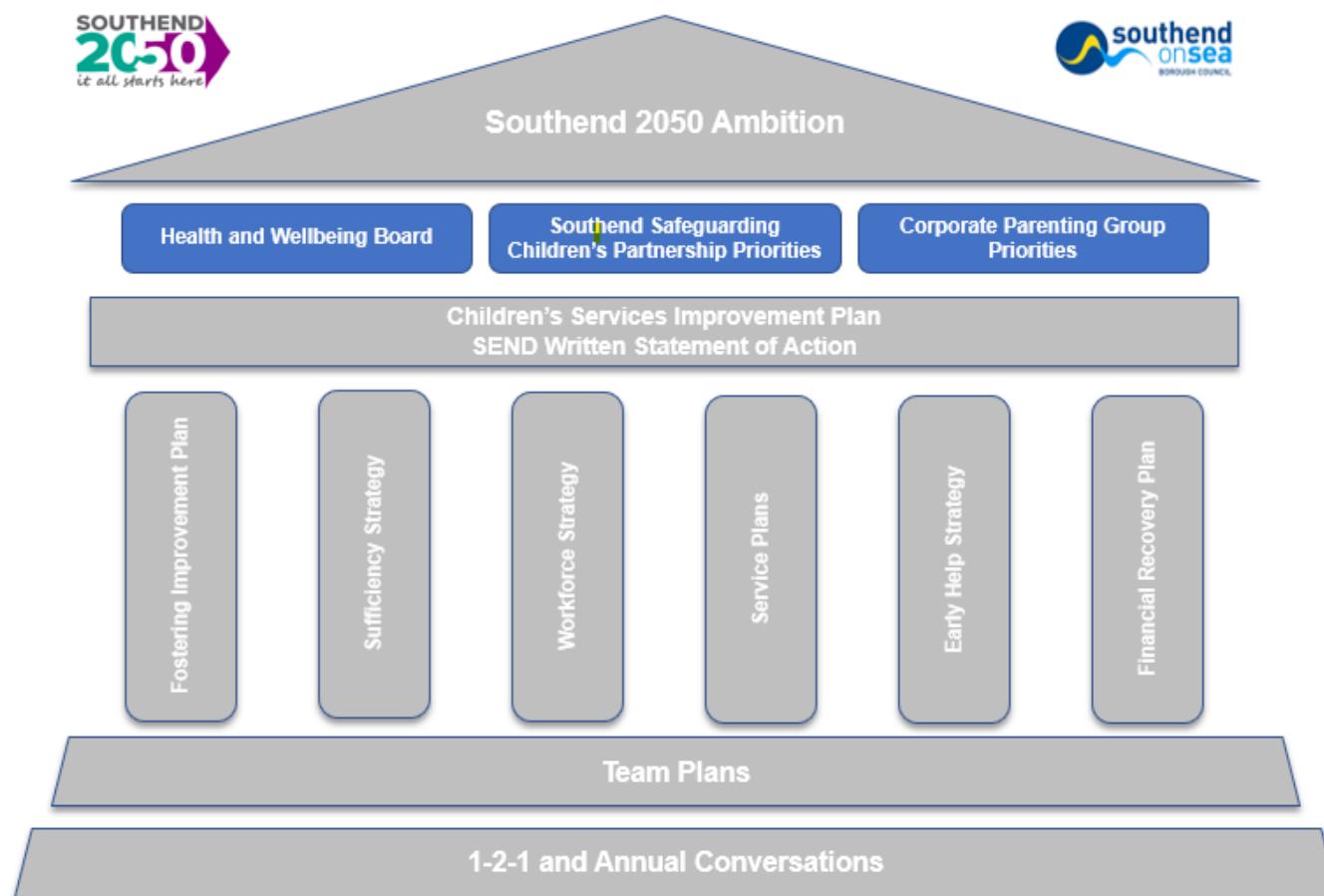
# Shared Ambition

The success of this plan rests on connecting the work of all our staff to our strategic plans and Southend 2050 ambition. The schematic below visualises how strong 1-2-1s, Annual conversations and team plans underpin this plan and our Southend 2050 ambition.

We will connect staff to our wider ambitions through:

- Listening to the voice of our professionals, with regular two-way communication through all levels of our service
- Utilising co-production principles, using the knowledge, skills and experience of our staff to shape our plans
- Clearly communicating our progress against milestones, and
- Embracing innovation and encouraging staff to promote ideas and new ways to achieving our outcomes

Our Six Priorities below have been identified as our main areas of focus required to delivering these outcomes:



# Our Priorities

1 Leadership will drive our ambition and purpose throughout the organisation

2 Improve the quality of practice so it is consistently good or better

3 Improve the outcomes for looked after children

4 Deliver the right service at the right time

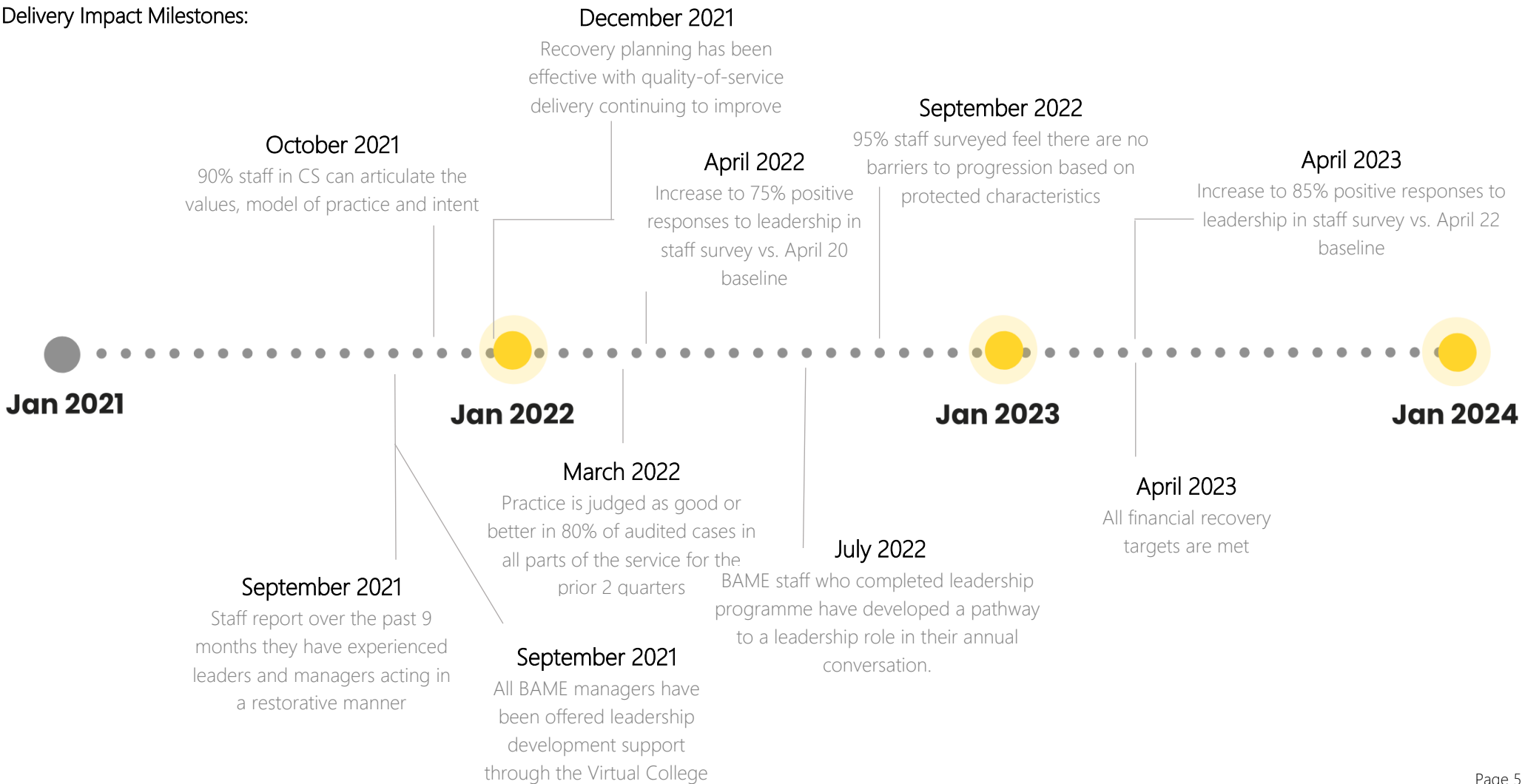
5 Improve financial effectiveness and sustainability within Children's Services

6 Work with children, young people and families to shape services

Priority One: Leadership will drive our ambition and purpose throughout the organisation

Expected outcome once delivered: Our ambition and purpose is understood and supported throughout all areas of the organisation. Staff feel part of our plans and feel they can actively contribute

Delivery Impact Milestones:

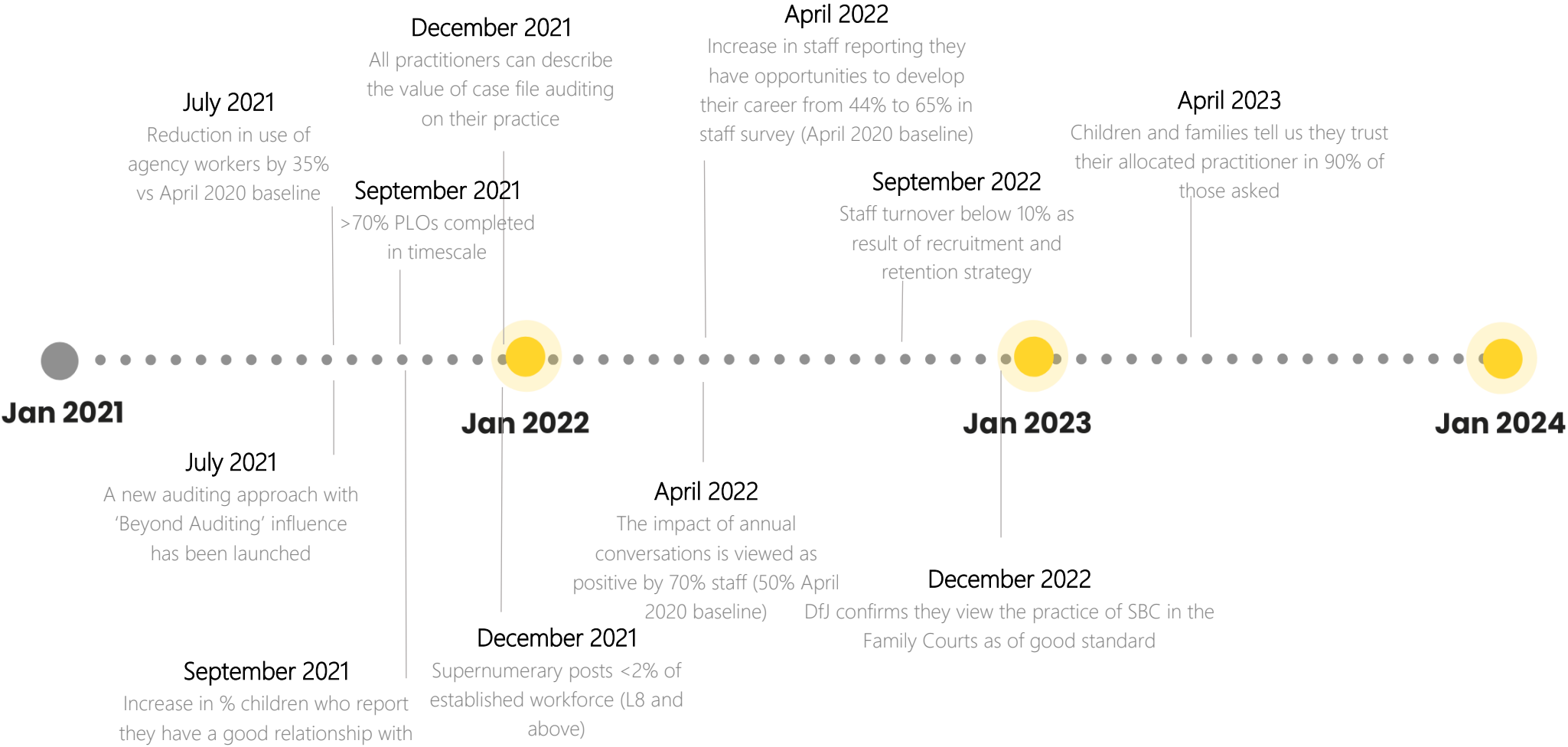


Ref	Action	Start Date	Outcome	Due Date	Lead
1.1	Embed our new strategic intent which aligns to 2050, covid-19 recovery, financial recovery & service plans	June 2020	At least 90% of CS Staff can articulate the strategic intent, values and model of practice, indicating an embedded strategic intent (measured through staff survey)	Oct 2021	DCS
1.4	Review the revised corporate parenting group priorities and practice to ensure that it continues to be focussed on outcomes for children and informed by children and young people.	July 2021	<div>Corporate Parenting Group works with partners and the wider council to improve the outcomes for looked after children.</div> <div>Corporate Parenting Group has clear priorities to deliver good outcomes for children</div> <div>Children and young people contribute to CPG</div>	Oct 2021	Chair of CPG
1.5	Implement a coherent senior management structure, streamlining accountability for functions and performance and puts the needs of children at the centre of its design.	July 2021	<div>Services are aligned under Heads of Service to supports improved performance and outcomes with specific service plans.</div> <div>Stronger professional relationships and increased collaboration have resulted from the streamlining of service areas.</div>	Dec 2021	Exec Director and DCS
1.6	Relaunch our restorative model of practice, supporting its use via learning & development initiatives	Jan 2021	<div>The restorative model is consistently evidenced through our forms, processes and interactions with children and young people</div> <div>Our workforce at all stages of their employment with SBC receive the support they require to practice in a restorative manner</div>	Oct 2021	DCS
1.7	Enhance our leadership capability through actively contributing to 2050 outcomes, TT programme and development opportunities with the Virtual College.	Jan 2021	<div>Children's Services leaders actively shapes and supports the delivery of our 2050 and Transforming Together outcomes.</div> <div>BAME managers have the opportunity for leadership development support through the Virtual College</div>	Sept 2021	Exec Director

Priority Two: Improve quality assurance so that quality of practice is consistently good or better across all services

Expected outcome once delivered: Children and families receive high quality services without delay which improve their lives.

Delivery Impact Milestones:





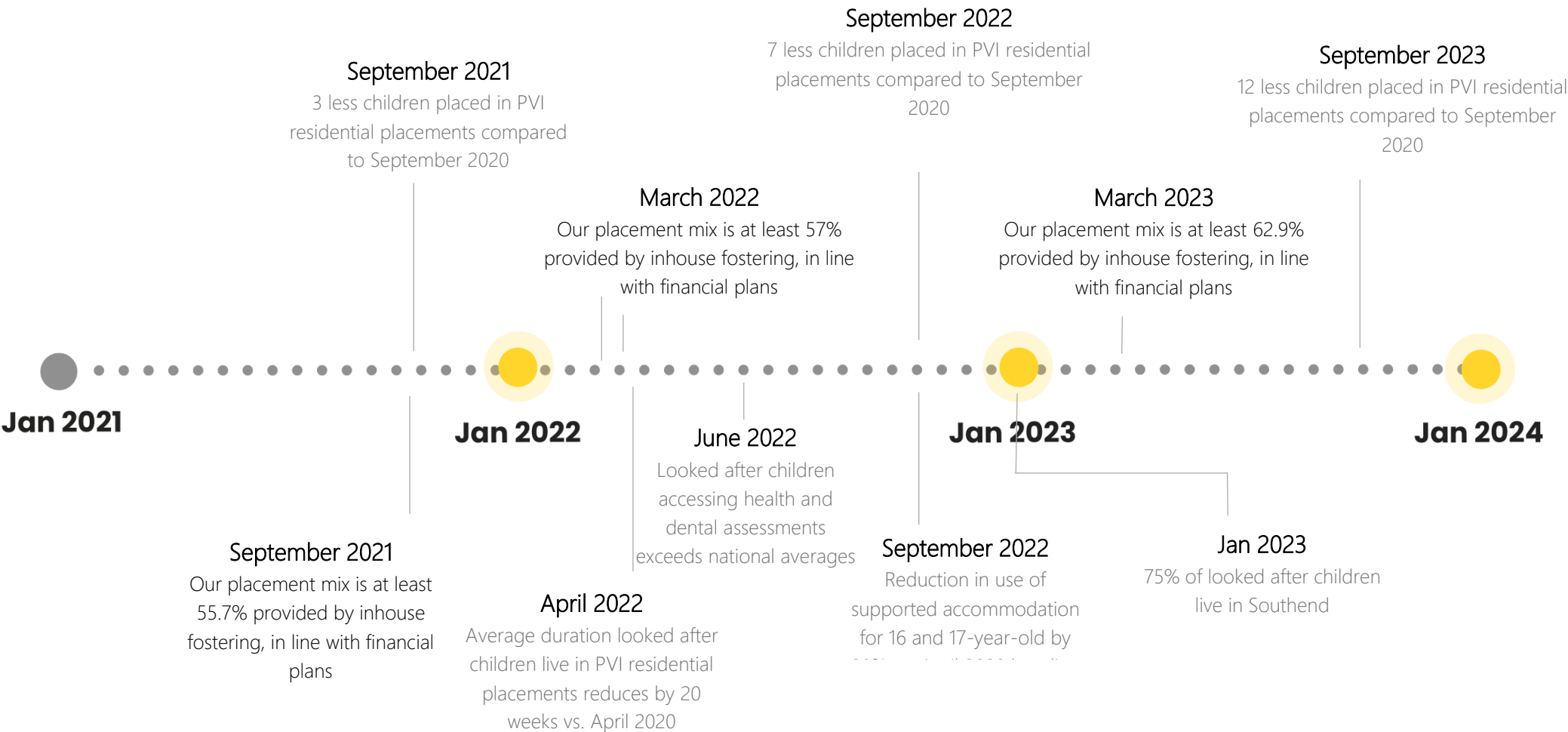
Ref	Action	Start Date	Outcome	Date Due	Lead
2.1	Deliver the Recruitment and Retention strategy to support a permanent and stable workforce	Jan 2021	Reduction in use of agency workers by 35% vs September 2020 baseline (13) <i>c162</i>	Dec 2021	HoS (RB)
			Recruitment targets for Apprentices, NQSW and PE educators are achieved in line with R&R strategy.		
			90% NQSW successfully complete the ASYE within 13 months (excluding LTS and Maternity)		
			Supernumerary posts <2% of established workforce ( <i>L8 and above</i> ) <i>FY 20/21 - 181.8 FTE L8 and above</i>		
2.2	Develop and deliver a workforce strategy (including a comprehensive CPD offer and succession planning) which supports a knowledgeable and skilled workforce at all levels	Dec 2020	84% staff feel they are well supported by their managers <i>(74% baseline April '19 Employee Engagement Survey)</i>	April 2022	HoS (RB)
			90% of managers can articulate their role in proving challenge and support as referenced in the workforce strategy		
			Managers have the knowledge, skills and capabilities to support the delivery of good and outstanding services		
2.4	Provide clear guidance, expectations and offer of support for CPD, annual conversations and group supervision	Jan 2021	All service areas receive a consistent level of professional support which positively influences their development	Sep 2021	HoS (RB)
			85% of practitioners can show how CPD supervision and annual conversations supports the quality of their practice with children and families		
			>85% of case supervision is judged as good or better in file audit for 4 consecutive months <i>c155</i>		
2.5	Provide training and support for auditors, including team managers and IRO, which reinforces our expectations of quality and quantity of quality assurance activity.	Jan 2021	Auditor ratings achieve >90% agreement with moderator judgements	Dec 2021	HoS (RB)
			All team and service managers meet expectations of audit set in the Audit Guidance		
			85% of audited cases to be judged as good or outstanding		
			CPD Offer evidences strong links to the findings of quality assurance activity		

2.6	Equip and Empower our workforce in using a broad range of quality assurance activity to shape practice, including the 'Beyond Auditing' approach	Jul 2021	Service Managers evidence how quality assurance and learning information has been used to improve outcomes for children in their service area (November)	Dec 2021	HoS (RB)
			OPIT produce a QA dashboard that includes elements such as children's voice, information from the IROs on quality of practice and complaints in addition to findings from the Beyond Auditing approach (November)		
			An additional outcome should be that the workforce are able to demonstrate how they use the QA dashboards to make changes to their practice (December)		
2.8	Ensure that current involvement with children and families is informed by history and leads to improved outcomes for children	Jan 2021	All children have an up-to-date chronology which is comprehensive and supports the quality of intervention <i>(Evidenced in Audit)</i>	Sep 2021	HoS (LD)
			Percentage of children who start to have a Child Protection Plan from 1st April, where it is their second or subsequent CPP within 2 years of previous CPP ending is less than 11%		HoS (RB)
			75% of audited plans are robust, effective and outcome focussed and therefore judged as good or above.		

# Priority Three: Improve outcomes for looked after children

Expected outcome once delivered: *Looked after children are supported in ways which offer them the best possible outcomes.*

## Delivery Impact Milestones:

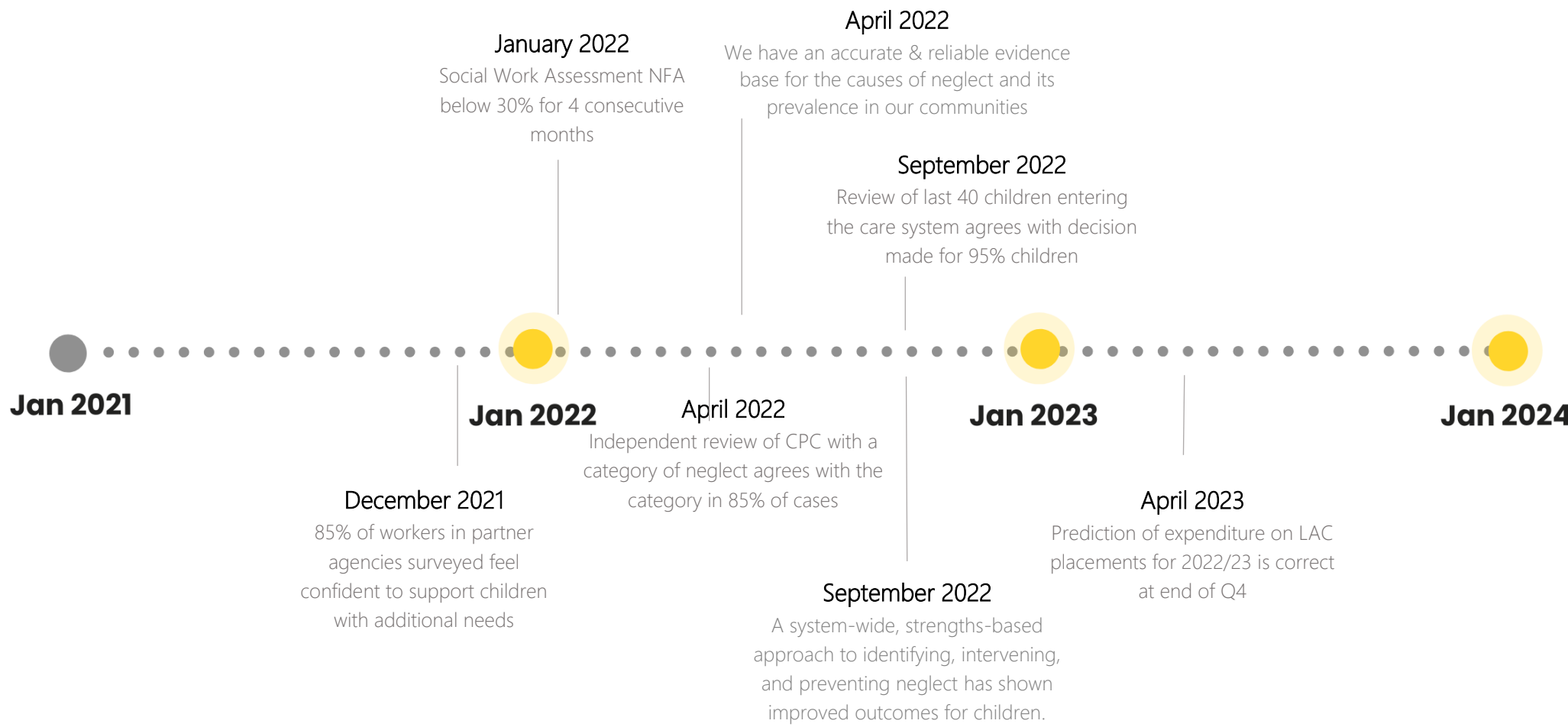


Ref	Action	Start Date	Outcome	Date Due	Lead
3.1	Develop a trauma informed fostering service which meets the complex needs of children in care and keeps children closer to home	Jan 2021	95% of annual household reviews occur within timescales	Sept 2021	HoS (JH)
			Family relationships are strengthened through the right support being provided to children with complex needs		
			Our placement mix is at least 55.7% provided by inhouse fostering, in line with financial plans		
3.2	Implement all parts of the sufficiency strategy, reporting quarterly progress to CSDMT and CPG	Jan 2021	We have recruited 10 new foster carers, half of our 21/22 target	Sept 2021	HoS (CS)
			4 young people placed in new residential unit in Southend		
3.3	Continue to provide challenge and support to partners the delivery of timely health assessments and dental checks	July 2020	100% new entrants of care are formally submitted for health assessments	Dec 2021	DCS
			Children receiving an IHA in line with statistical neighbours <i>c036, c042</i>		
			Looked after Children with a dentist recorded on LCS is 100%		
			Children receiving dental checks in line with statistical neighbours <i>(c043)</i>		
3.8	Ensure all permanency decisions are in the best interests of the child are made in a timely manner	Jan 2021	Children and young people have timely permanent arrangements leading to positive outcomes <i>(Evidenced through Audit)</i>	Oct 2021	HoS (LD)
			Placement order to Match is below National Average of 170 days <i>(Adoption Scorecard 16-19, A2)</i>	April 2022	HoS (JH)
			Time from care to placed with adoptive family is below National Average of 363 days <i>(Adoption Scorecard 16-19, A10)</i>		
3.9	Prepare and Launch a New Southend Offer, which strengthens placement stability and improves the offer for Foster Parents,	July 2021	Governance is in place which will support timely and effective responses to fostering recruitment challenges*remove	Dec 2021	HoS (JH)
			Service Level Agreements are in place which require providers to attend Placement Support Meetings in order for notice to be accepted.		
			Our New Southend Offer has been launched at the Fostering Conference (September)		
3.10	Improve placement stability for children in care embedding an agile response to handling need as it emerges	July 2020	Placement stability has increased, with 87% of children having less than 3 placements since April 2020 <i>c056</i>	Dec 2021	HoS (JH)
			Support plans are introduced where appropriate, which pre-empt need and reduce the likelihood of placement breakdown		
			We can evidence how strategies are impacting outcomes for our young people, through the introducing of a new reporting system		

# Priority Four: Deliver the Right Service at the Right Time

Expected outcome once delivered: Demand on services is well understood, enabling us to provide children, young people and families with the right service at the right time.

Delivery Impact Milestones:

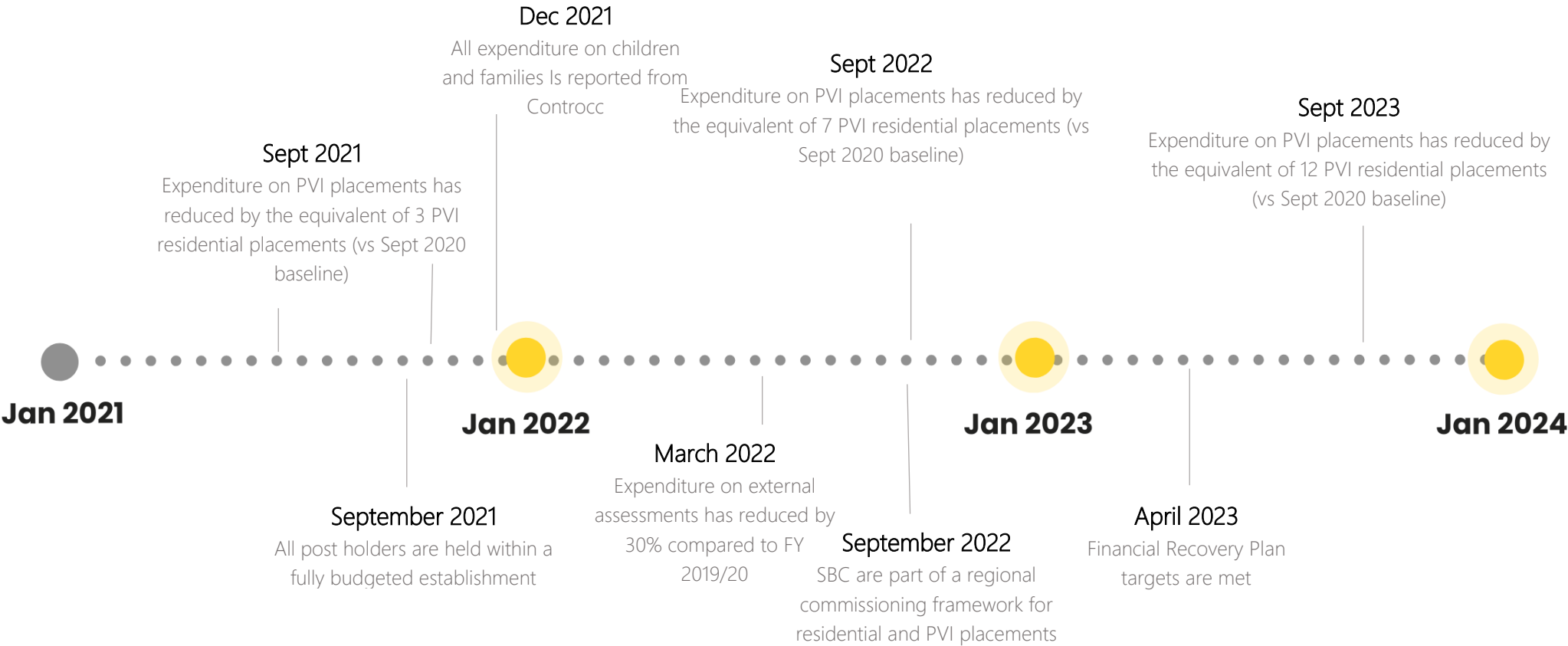


Ref	Action	Start Date	Outcome	Milestone Due	Lead
4.3	Improve our understanding of whether our rate of Looked After Children is at the correct level to meet need in Southend.	Jan 2021	Our LAC rate / numbers remain below our 95% upper confidence interval of forecast numbers <i>c002</i>	April 2022	DCS
4.4	Identify the key causes of neglect in our communities, using an accurate and reliable evidence base.	Nov 2020	<p>We have established an accurate &amp; reliable evidence base of the causes of neglect and its prevalence in our communities</p> <p>Our understanding of the causes of neglect is influenced and shaped through the voice of our community</p> <p>Community groups shape our response to the causes of neglect, playing an active role in the Thriving Communities programme and its revised programme of work</p>	April 2022	HoS (MB)
4.5	Fully embed a strengths-based approach within the Thriving Communities programme, using early intervention to prevent cases escalating to the point they require specialist intervention.	April 2021	<p>A core leadership community group is established and is driving forwards a strategic vision</p> <p>The voice of the community is influencing and shaping our approach to preventing neglect</p> <p>Children experiencing neglect are supported without needing a referral to CSC or EH</p> <p>Children at risk of neglect are supported at the earliest possible time through a system-wide, strengths-based approach.</p>	April 2022	HoS (MB)
4.6	Introduce an Early Help Partnership delivery plan which is evidence led and shaped by communities and partner organisations	Aug 2021	<p>We have an evidence-based understanding of Early Help provision across Southend-on-Sea</p> <p>We understand what data is collected by communities and partnership organisations, and can identify gaps</p> <p>The impact of existing Early Help provision is fully understood</p>	Dec 2021	HoS (CC)
4.7	Continue to deliver the Early Help Partnership Strategy, with a focus on reshaping provision based on what works	Jan 2022	<p>Children, young people and families receive the total support needed that improves their resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.</p> <p>Children, young people and families have access to co-ordinated Early Help in accordance with need as soon as difficulties are identified.</p>	Dec 2023	HoS (CC)

# Priority Five: Improve financial effectiveness and sustainability within Children's Services

Expected outcome once delivered: *Strong financial controls are an enabler and practiced throughout our service.*

## Delivery Impact Milestones:



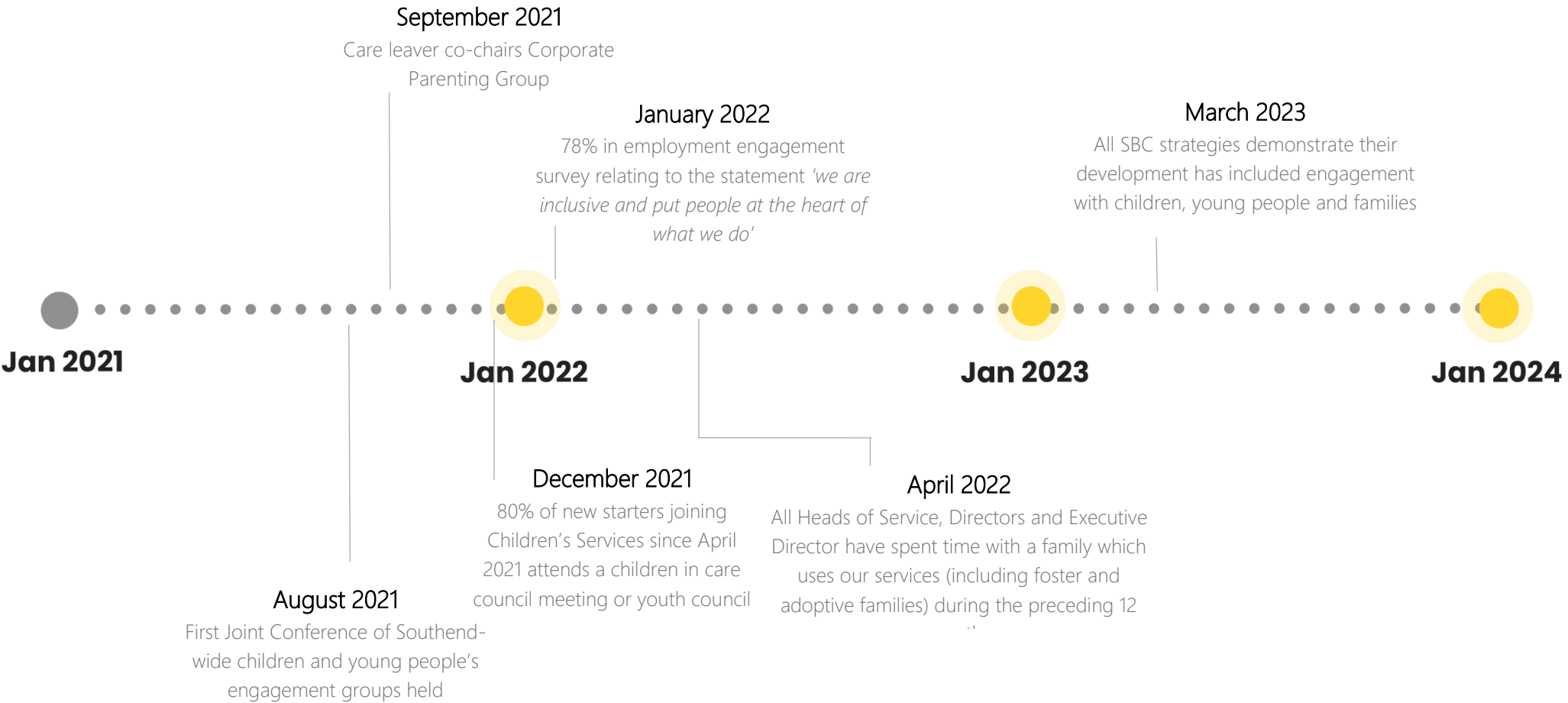
Ref	Action	Start Date	Outcome	Date Due	Lead
5.1	Introduce and embed robust financial control mechanisms throughout CS, including sharing clear practice expectations for all levels of expenditure	Jan 2021	100% s17 and s23 costs are paid through Controcc	Dec 2021	DCS
			Fostering payments are consistently applied and based on a child's needs		
			Leadership feel financial systems and processes are supporting their oversight		
5.2	Reduce the number of PVI residential and foster placements as a proportion of all placements	Nov 2020	Reduction of 3 PVI residential placements set against increase in in-house fostering placements	Sept 2021	HOS (CS)
			3% increase in use of in-house foster and kinship carers as a proportion of all foster carers		
5.3	Develop a commissioning and contracting function which has sufficient seniority and capacity to deliver service transformation and efficiencies.	July 2020	There is a strong commissioning plan in place which is beginning to realise efficiencies in the commissioning of services. The plan is aligned to our improvement plan, and includes service redesign, market testing and challenge to in-house providers.	Jan 2022	Director Integrated Comm.
5.4	Increase the effectiveness of control methods for high cost care packages, so that funding decisions take place at the most appropriate level.	Jan 2021	The funding and exit panel regularly review individual cases of an appropriate complexity and/or cost, with decisions informed by those involved in the care and support journey	Oct 2021	HoS (CS)
			High-cost care placements are quality assured so they achieve value for money and offer appropriate care for the assessed needs of children		



Priority Six: Work with children, young people and families to shape services

Expected outcome once delivered: Children, young people and families are an active part of how we shape services, helping co-design and co-produce where possible.

Delivery Impact Milestones:



Ref	Action	Start Date	Outcome	Date Due	Lead
62	Deliver 3 co-designed and co-produced projects with young people, based on areas they feel need change. <i>(Informed through Summer 2020 engagement with LAC, CiN and children subject to CP plans)</i>	Jan 2021	Children in care have as few barriers to connecting with us virtually as possible <i>(Achieved through CICC Connected and Smart project)</i>	Sept 2021	HoS (RB)
			CYP can access their savings without delay when leaving care <i>(Achieved through CICC Savings project)</i>		
			8 young people are accredited as peer mentors for looked after children		
			Young people have reviewed the peer mentoring and care pack projects, and confirm they are meeting their needs.		
63	Expand the representation of children's voices through the Children in Care Council, Southend Youth Council and other channels.	Dec 2020	All secondary schools are represented and active in decision making at Southend Youth Council	Dec 2021	HoS (RB)
			Children in Care Council is representative of the LAC population as a whole		
			Children and young people who are not part of the CiCC or SYC are familiar with multiple ways in which they can influence and shape services		
64	Improve the quality and frequency of contact between Senior Leaders and children and families who use our services.	Jan 2021	The transformation of Children's Services is shaped through regular dialogue between Senior Leaderships (Executive, Director, Heads of Service) and children, young people and families.	Sept 2021	Executive Director and DCS
65	Enhance the coproduction of services with our workforce and community, by maximising use of our principle social worker forum and implementing a workforce led improvement group	Nov 2020	Our services design is influenced and involved the children, young people and families we serve.	Dec 2021	DCS
			We understand our workforce's perception of coproduction methods, and its ability to shape services based on the views of children and young people <i>(Baseline established through staff survey)</i>		

# Governance

This Improvement Plan will evolve as outcomes for children, young people and families are achieved. It is through dialogue with our staff, children, young people and families we serve that we can ensure our actions deliver the outcomes we have planned.

## Children's Services Improvement Plan

- Sign off:** Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB)
- Scrutiny:** CSIB
- Report to:** Safeguarding Partnership

## Fostering Improvement Plan

- Sign off:** Performance Board (PB)

## Sufficiency Strategy

- Sign off:** Cabinet
- Scrutiny:** Corporate Parenting Group (CPG)

## Early Help Strategy

- Sign off:** Safeguarding Partnership
- Scrutiny:** Safeguarding Partnership

## Workforce Strategy

- Sign off:** CSDMT
- Scrutiny:** CSDMT

## Service Plans

- Sign off:** CSDMT
- Scrutiny:** CSDMT