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**To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

**1 November 2018**

**Subject: Progress on Children's Services Improvement Plan**

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**1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the progress with the Children's Services Improvement Plan reported to the Children's Services Improvement Board on 3 October 2018. The next Improvement Board will be held on 24 January 2019 to sign off the full Children's Services Improvement Plan.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) Consider the progress made to date
  - 2) Receive a full report from the Children's Services Improvement Board to include the completed children's services improvement plan and performance report trajectory on 28 February 2019
  - 3) Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member

**3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 The Ofsted Inspection of Coventry's Children's Services and the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), published in March 2014, judged services and the LSCB to be inadequate. As a result the Department for Education issued an Improvement Notice on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The two year review was held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and focused on quality of practice; the effectiveness of the children's services system and partnership working. Ofsted re-inspected Children's Services on 6<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> March 2017, the outcome of the inspection was published on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017, Children's Services were judged as "requires improvement to be good". Services for Children are no longer inadequate.
- 3.2 The Department for Education (DfE) removed Children's Services from intervention on 13 June 2017, the service is no longer subject to an improvement notice. Supervision and support has been provided by the DfE over the last 12 months, which included two reviews held in January 2018 and June 2018. This has now ended.
- 3.3 To oversee the improvement journey and as a response to the inadequate rating a Children's Service Improvement Board was established. An experienced Improvement consultant and retired Her Majesty Inspector (HMI), chairs the Children's Services Improvement Board. The Board includes elected Members, Council representatives and representatives from partner agencies in the City as well as a representative from the Department for Education. Progress is reported to the Improvement Board every twelve weeks.
- 3.4 The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have both given public commitment that Children's Services remains a key priority for the Council. This includes prioritising funding for Children's Services to maintain its capacity to improve. The Council, alongside partner organisations continue a relentless focus on securing improvements in services for

children, young people and families to ensure they are safeguarded and achieve positive outcomes.

- 3.5 Ofsted's revised new framework includes focused visits to local authorities who are judged to be 'requires improvement' the first visit was held on 30-31 January 2018. Two Inspectors spent two days reviewing the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), and speaking to social workers and partners. Visits were also made to two area social teams to review children in need cases. The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 22 February 2018. A further focused inspection or Joint Targeted Area Inspection could occur at any time and a full standard inspection is anticipated in the future.

#### **4 Workforce**

- 4.1 Recruiting and retaining experienced social workers is a challenge across children and families social work, and in particularly in area based teams. This is a both a regional issue across the West Midlands and Nationally. To increase the number of experienced social workers, Children's Services held an Open evening on 2 October 2018, offering experienced social workers an opportunity to apply for vacancies and be interviewed on the same day. The evening was actively promoted through Facebook/LinkedIn/Guardian/radio and the job shop. The event successfully resulted in 7 offers of appointment and a further event is being planned in January 2019.
- 4.2 Through the continued work on the Social Work Academy model, it is the service's aspiration to be a leading regional employer of choice for social workers. As a member of the West Midlands Teaching Partnership Coventry offers a number of opportunities and benefits to social workers this includes a Step Up to Social Work Graduate Pathway; a Frontline Programme and an Aspirant Social Work Programme Pre-Qualifying Pathway', , the open event provided an opportunity to promote the programmes and pathways on offer.
- 4.3 A new Progression Scheme introduces a career pathway for experienced social workers to apply for an Advanced Social Worker role. A consultation process commenced on 24 September for 30 days, the new framework will be implemented on 1 December 2018.
- 4.4 Exit interviews continue to be undertaken for social workers who leave. The current exit interview report highlights that there is no particular theme and reasons vary. Further work will continue and Exit interview reports produced to monitor and review this.
- 4.5 A set of 7 Practice Standards have been launched which are part of the service's approach to ensure that services are delivered to an agreed quality.

#### **5 Improvement Board progress**

- 5.1 An update was provided to board members on the review of school attendance. A number of initiatives are being undertaken to improve attendance. The average attendance of all Children Looked After for the academic year 2017/18 was 92.40%. The average for Coventry pupils attending school was 94.3%. The current strategy will be reviewed and updated to ensure fit for purpose.
- 5.2 The Police reported that a draft guidance document has been produced to address CSE levels of risk. This is being populated by partners and will be launched at the end of the year.
- 5.3 A new early help assessment has been developed and is being trialled in the Family Hubs. A system is being developed -the Early Help Management system and training is being mapped out to support all partners/practitioners with the implementation of the new early help assessment. It is anticipated that this will go live in the New Year.
- 5.4 Signs of Safety training (SOS) continues to be rolled out. There are 4 levels of training. A total of 277 staff have attended the 2 day training. (150 City Council, staff 127 partner agencies). A number of staff require the half day (1,200) and 1 day (179) training. Additional practice leads have been identified to deliver the half day and 1 day training to deliver this earlier than originally planned. The training will be evaluated to ensure impact of training.

- 5.5 A new CAMHS LAC service has been jointly commissioned by Coventry and Rugby CCG and the City Council. The service formally launched in April and is being implemented on a phased basis. The initial focus of the service has been on LAC up to age 18. The service pathway was extended to Care Leavers from July. It is too early to assess impact, this is planned for December and will be reported to Board in January.
- 5.6 The police have a dedicated gang's team in Coventry. A number of interventions are currently in place, work being undertaken to prevent and manage risk and management of gangs. A Strategy to bring all the initiatives together will be presented to the Board in January.

## **6 Performance**

- 6.1 The service continue to experience increasing numbers of Looked After Children. As at 24 September 2018 this was 711. The pressures concern an increase in connected persons placements as a result of a court process, a rise in the number of 16 year olds presenting as homeless and the number of children exiting care reducing.
- 6.2 Contact timeliness is 48.9% YTD there has been a decrease in the number of contacts completed within timescale. The volume of contacts continues to impacts on the timeliness of decision making. Every contact is reviewed the day it is received and RAG rated. All urgent referrals are progressed within timescale.
- 6.3 Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub Assessment completion timeliness is 52.7% YTD this has slightly improved.
- 6.4 Re-referrals have been increasing. Management oversight continues to drive improvement in this area.
- 6.5 Children seen within 7 working days is 55.7%, children are not being seen quickly enough, a dip sample was undertaken and evidenced that the main issue was recording. Children are seen within timescale and many of these are seen within 3 days of the referral. Recording is a critical issue and has been reinforced with all Managers at a recent manager briefing.
- 6.6 35.8.1% of children have had their care plans recorded within 10 days. Further work has started to understand the reasons and action plan will be developed to address this issue.
- 6.7 Although performance in assessments is not yet good enough the timeliness is improving and is showing an improving picture month by month.
- 6.8 The Children's Services Leadership team will identify the gaps to improve consistency and a plan will be produced for the next 12 months to improve performance trajectory of what is needed to get to good.

## **7 Succession planning in preparation of the cessation of the Improvement Board**

- 7.1 A report on the future arrangements for continuing and sustaining improvements in Coventry was presented by the Independent Chair and Director of Childrens Services at Improvement board on 3 October 2018. There is a requirement in the current improvement plan to consider future arrangements for monitoring the continuous improvement of Children's Services beyond the end of the current plan.
- 7.2 Whilst in many local authorities this responsibility would be located with the local safeguarding children board (LSCB) as business as usual, imminent changes to the operation of the LSCB mean an interim position for a maximum of twelve months is necessary whilst the required new arrangements to the LSCB are considered and implemented.
- 7.3 The Children's Services Improvement Plan will be reviewed and signed off by the Improvement Board in January 2019. To manage the transition from an Improvement board led oversight arrangement, the proposal is for a smaller executive group to replace the existing Board and retain oversight of Children's Services continuous improvement. The group will meet on a regular basis with a tighter focus on continuous improvement and inspection preparation.

- 7.4 Subject to satisfactory inspection by June 2020 the Improvement Overview Group would cease and oversight return to the revised Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (currently the LSCB).
- 7.5 Board members agreed to the revised arrangements, the new membership will be determined and agreed at the Improvement Board in January.

## **8 Overview Summary**

- 8.1 The last phase of the improvement journey demonstrates the significant progress and changes in moving forward.
- 8.2 The Children's senior leadership team and extended Leadership continue to embed and work together driving forward practice improvements and service changes. This phase of improvement relies heavily on corporate support and the support from partners to ensure that improvement continues and is sustained and the improvement plan can be signed off. There is explicit intention to ensure that Children's Services reaches a position where it is continuously achieving good outcomes for the Children of Coventry. The Children's Services Strategic Plan I supports our journey in "Getting to Good" and is particularly important as in January 2019 Children's Services could be twelve months away from its next full inspection.

## **9 Communications**

- 9.1 The e-newsletter continues to be produced focusing on Children's Services. This is issued to all staff in Children's Services, all partners, senior managers and Members to ensure everyone is aware of the progress made so far, what has still to be achieved and the role all employees can play in supporting the service in 'getting to good.' In addition to this, the Director of Children's Services holds open sessions for all staff and gets out and about visiting teams and talking to staff. In addition, Children's Services are holding six Lets' Talk Children Sessions to engage further with staff.

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