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

**5<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Subject: Progress on Children's Services Improvement Plan in response to Ofsted Single Inspection and the Review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board**

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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 2 October 2015. The report is based on data from August 2015, unless stated otherwise. The next Improvement Board will be held on 18 November 2015.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny Board 2:
- 1) Note the progress made to date.
  - 2) Receive regular updates from the Children's Services Improvement Board that will include further progress relating to the children's services improvement plan.

## **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. The Ofsted report identified a number of priority actions and areas for improvement. In response to the Ofsted report, a Children's Services Improvement Board was established and an Improvement Plan published on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014. A revised and updated Improvement Plan was published on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015.
- 3.2 The Children's Services Improvement Board is chaired by Mark Rogers, Chief Executive at Birmingham City Council. 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 six weeks.
- 3.3 The Department for Education issued an Improvement Notice on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The Improvement notice is reviewed every six months by the Department for Education. A six month review took place on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and the twelve month review took place on 30<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015. The feedback from the review is provided in section 7 of this report. The Independent Chairs of both the Improvement Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board also submit a written report to the Minister on a regular basis.

3.4 An Executive Board was established in January 2015 in order to focus on maintaining momentum and evaluating progress against the Improvement Plan. This Board meets every six weeks prior to the Improvement Board

3.5 The Council, alongside partner organisations will retain a relentless focus on securing improvements in services for children, young people and families to ensure they are safeguarded and achieve positive outcomes.

#### 4 Improvement Plan Themes

4.1 The revised Children's Services Improvement Plan, completed on 10 March 2015 includes six key themes, which have been aligned to the DfE improvement notice. The plan provides a stronger focus on quality of practice and workforce development, and the continuation of improvements to the LSCB. A summary of the plan is shown in **Appendix 1**. The six themes are as follows:

- Early Help & Partnership Working
- Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Quality and Effectiveness of Practice
- Quality of Assurance and Audit
- Leadership and Governance
- Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency

#### 5 Children's Services Improvement Plan Progress to date

5.1 The following progress was reported at the Children's Services Improvement Board on 2 October 2015.

##### **Theme 1 – Early Help and Partnership**

The operational delivery of the draft Early Help Strategy continues. The strategy will be fully signed off in November 2015.

The Acting Early pilots continue to evidence improved integrated working, improved communications and information sharing. The remaining 5 new sites will be operational during October.

The multi-agency eCAF system records all active open CAFs. Health now holds a greater proportion of CAF's. However, the overall proportion of CAF's held by the LA remains at around 74% as it has done for some time. The table below provides the breakdown of location of CAFs held at end of August 2015

<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Children & Families First	1012	51.50%
Children's Centre	362	18.4%
Children's Services	80	4.1%
Education	7	0.4%
Health	117	6.0%
Schools	368	19.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2219</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Number &amp; non-LA</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>26%</b>

Coventry established a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in September 2014. The functioning of the MASH has been assisted by the appointment of a Service Manager who is also responsible for the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) team.

An Independent Review of the Coventry MASH has been completed by Nigel Boulton, an ex- Senior Police Officer who advised on setting up the first MASH nationally, and has advised on others. The report was presented by him to the MASH Board at the beginning of September 2015 and was discussed at the Improvement Board on 2 October 2015. The main findings of the review were discussed, a Task and Finish Group is considering the recommendations and their view as to which recommendations should be adopted and will be presented to the next MASH Board and Improvement Board in November 2015.

The on-going issue relating to Strategy Discussions/Meetings was discussed at Improvement Board on 2 October 2015. A briefing note to clarify current processes and practice was agreed. Janet Mokades, the LSCB Chair will be evaluating whether the new processes/arrangements are working at a meeting planned for 23 October 2015. The LSCB Chair will report back progress and provide an opinion on the compliance of strategy discussions at the next Improvement Board meeting.

Monthly monitoring of re-referral rates is in place to ensure that diversion and step down to Early Help are appropriate and effective. The average rate of re-referrals in the last 12 months has remained below those of our statistical neighbours, although, the monthly average has seen a steady rise since April 2015. The year to date of 29.9% is a significant increase on the 21.5% recorded in 2014/15. Referral feedback is being tightened up and provided by secure email and further work is being undertaken to understand the upward trend in re-referrals. The MASH ensures that all referrers are given information as to the result of their referral.

The CSE delivery plan is in place and is being driven through the CSE Board and the Operational Subgroup to improve the city's response and awareness across all communities and partners. We are currently seeking a new delivery model across the partners via a Prevent, Prepare, Pursue and Protect Plan.

With effect from September 2015 Barnardos has been undertaking return home interviews for young people missing from care. Children missing from education are currently monitored separately, work is currently being undertaken to join up the activity around missing; future reports will provide missing episodes by home, care and education.

### **Theme 2 - Local Safeguarding Children Board**

The LSCB provides a regular progress update to the Improvement Board to highlight progress against the three requirements set out in the Improvement Notice. These are;

- the LSCB to be strengthened so it can ensure that partners work together effectively
- multi-agency practice and individual partner audits are robust
- all partners are committed to a shared set of priorities for safeguarding, child protection and early intervention.

The following progress was reported to the Improvement Board on 2 October 2015:

The policy and procedures subgroup has now started work. A simplified and merged procedure for children missing from home, care or school has been drafted and up to date summary figures for children missing from all these categories will be provided to main Board at its October meeting. Work to refine and monitor the implementation of procedures for hard to engage families continues. Following the legal challenge to the indiscriminate reporting of all DV notifications to schools, the process is being further refined.

The Board's Quality and Effectiveness subgroup has recently carried out a multi-agency audit of some CSE cases. The results have not yet been analysed and presented to Board but it has been agreed that they will feed into the Operation Encompass review.

There has been good progress on staffing. The quality assurance co-ordinator has now taken up post. This enables the Board to further develop its assurance role.

Considerable activity is underway to improve multi-agency practice and single agency audit. It is clear that there is some good work being done but there are also aspects of multi-agency practice that are still uneven and lacking in rigour. The Board's safeguarding workforce multi-agency audit has now been completed and the results are being analysed.

Following the Board's July event on strategy discussions, progress is being monitored on a regular basis and a date has been set for a recall meeting in October to evaluate how well the new processes are working.

The S175 schools audit was completed and presented to Board. There was a very good response from maintained schools, academies, free schools, pupil referral units and colleges, with 100% completing the audit. No major deficiencies emerged from the findings. Where there were shortfalls, these have been followed up with advice and recommendations. Schools are expected to confirm that they have complied with requirements and compliance will be monitored. Of particular interest to the Board was the number of children in need of safeguarding who are being monitored by schools – there are one thousand one hundred and thirty six. These are children who do not meet the thresholds for external agency referral. It is clear that a great many Coventry children are receiving early help from schools, a key universal service. The Board's small investigation of the nature of the cases and the help being given by schools revealed a spectrum of needs to which schools are responding.

The first Board peer review panel was held in July. The next is scheduled for October. The panel consisted of two Board members from social care and education together with the Chair. The session reviewed the quality of practice in Early Help in health and the voluntary sector. This was a very successful session at which both the panel and the participants learned a lot. It is clear that the quality of practice is variable, with some very good aspects and that the biggest quality issue is the lack of knowledge amongst practitioners of what is available in services other than their own. This leads on occasion to default referrals to social care. A short report on recommendations and action flowing from the findings will go to the next main Board.

The LSCB have produced pocket sized cards and large bright posters setting out the Seven Golden rules for information sharing in order to remind staff across all services of the importance of doing this when children are at risk of harm. There has been high demand for these, an encouraging sign that should help lead to more consistent information sharing and so better safeguarding outcomes for children.

It is now a year since the Board adopted its new focus on the voice of the child and outcomes for children. The draft annual report, which will go to the October board meeting, will pull together what we have learned from listening to the voice of the child. It will assess what progress has been made over the year and how what has been done has impacted on outcomes for children.

### **Theme 3 - Quality and Effectiveness of Practice**

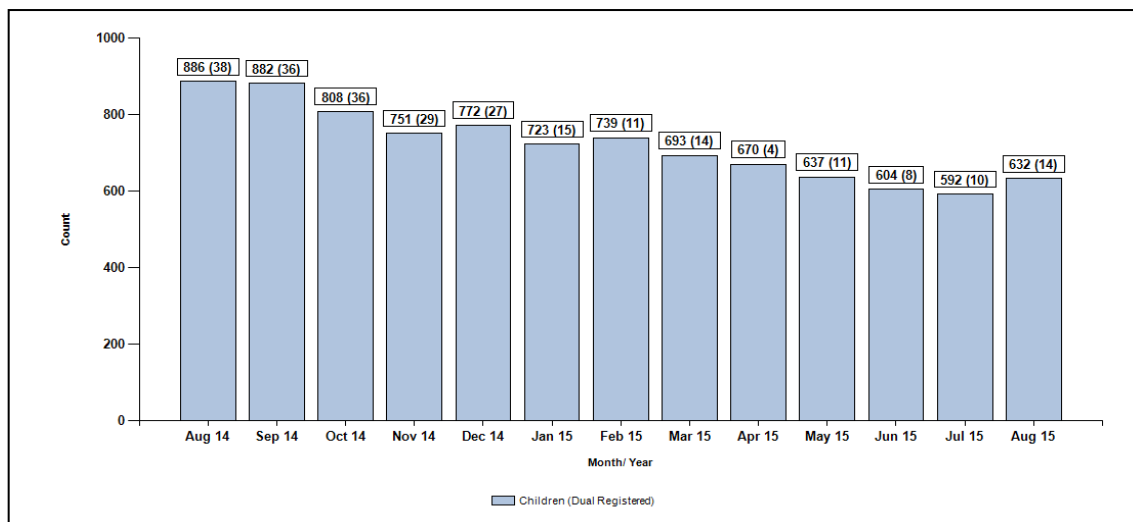
A draft Workforce Strategy has been completed and was presented to the Improvement Board in June 2015. The Board's comments are being incorporated in to a final document. Consideration is now being given to taking forward the recommendations relating to secondments and bursaries for unqualified Coventry staff who would like to be considered for such a scheme.

The second phase of the campaign to appoint experienced social workers will be launched in October 2015. There are currently 16 applicants (13 are newly qualified Social Workers) who are in the recruitment and selection process.

A third Practice Educator Post has been agreed and appointed to in order to support the significant number of Newly Qualified Social Workers.

"Back to Basics" training, which forms an important part of the Learning and Development programme, has been running throughout the summer and will continue alongside the very full range of training courses which have been commissioned or are being delivered in-house. The outcome will be a set of shared and agreed practice standards and expectations which will form the foundation of work with children and families.

The number of children with a Child Protection Plan increased in August 2015 to 632, see table below, as at 8 October this number has reduced further to 567. Only 9(1.4%) of children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan at the end of August 2015 had been on a plan for more than 24 months.



Timeliness of assessments undertaken has continued to be above 90% since April 2015.

The Local Government Association has been asked to undertake a Safeguarding Practice Diagnostic Peer Review. This took place between 19 and 22 October 2015 for 4 days. It focused on two main aspects:

- 1) The quality of practice with particular emphasis on recent (approximately one year) improvements in its effectiveness
- 2) How supervision and support to social workers has improved and is evidenced in case management.

The following **Key Lines of Enquiry** have been agreed:

- Are child protection plans robust and do they identify what professionals and families need to do to make children safe?
- Is the identification of needs and the development of plans translated into effective action that impacts positively on the child?
- How is drift identified and managed?
- What is the quality of the social work relationship with children and how is this evidenced in case files?
- How is the work of health professionals impacting on case planning?
- What evidence is there of improvement in the Quality of Social worker support and supervision
- Are thresholds for services appropriately applied in accordance with Working Together 2015?

#### **Theme 4 - Quality Assurance and Audit**

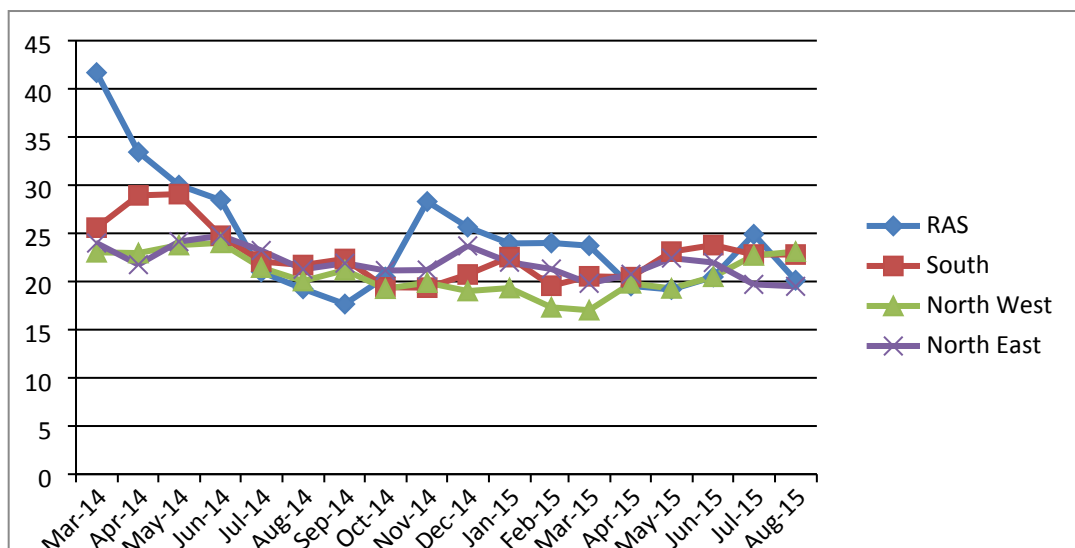
A review of the focus of performance management across the service has been completed and performance dashboards for each team are now available. Each service has identified a minimum of 3 key indicators on which to focus on a weekly basis.

Full case audits will be undertaken on a monthly basis from September 2015, with the aim of completing 40 cases per month.

Quality Assurance activity with particular reference to impact will be reviewed this month, with more detail and key themes from audits and multi-agency audits and single audits fed into Improvement Board. The Local Government Safeguarding Diagnostic review in October 2015 will also look at this more detail. The LSCB Chair has also been asked to provide fresh opinion on the LSCB framework and the audit process in the Council, as this is not yet in place.

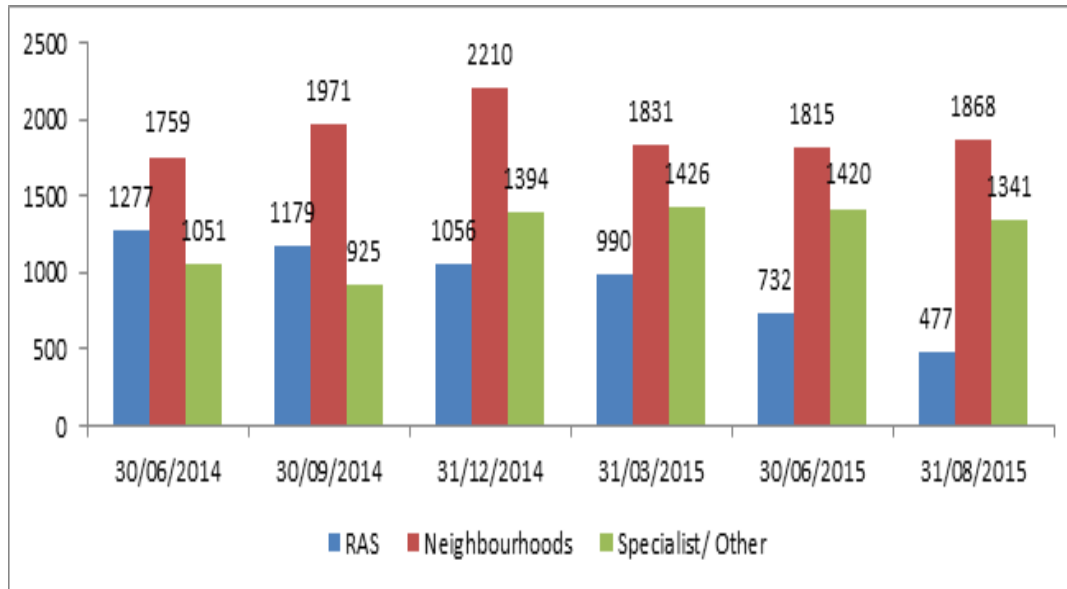
#### **Theme 5 - Leadership and Governance**

Caseloads in the Referral and Assessment service (RAS) averaged 20 at the end of August 2015 and remain within target (20-25) Caseloads in the Neighbourhood teams averaged 19 to 23 at the end of the August 2015 with the target being 20 to 22.



Caseloads for Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO'S) have significantly reduced and have averaged 74 to 76 from April to August 2015 as against 129 in October 2014. They are now almost at the level recommended in the IRO handbook.

The number of open cases held by the Referral and Assessment Service (RAS) has reduced since June and reported 477 cases in August 2015, compared with 1000 cases previously. This is being reviewed to assess whether this is a trend.



Social Workers are receiving regular supervision, 68% (237) staff received supervision in August 2015. The 32% (110) who did not have supervision within the 4 week period was due to factors such as annual leave, sickness absence, maternity leave and emergencies such as attendance at Court. There is also a number of staff who have supervision bi-monthly as monthly supervision is not a requirement and do not hold caseloads. Their inclusion in this indicator distorts the figure.

A second Supervision Survey was launched in mid-September 2015. This is very similar to the survey undertaken by the same external organisation a year ago. This will sit alongside a Member Task and Finish Group, which will be completing its work in November.

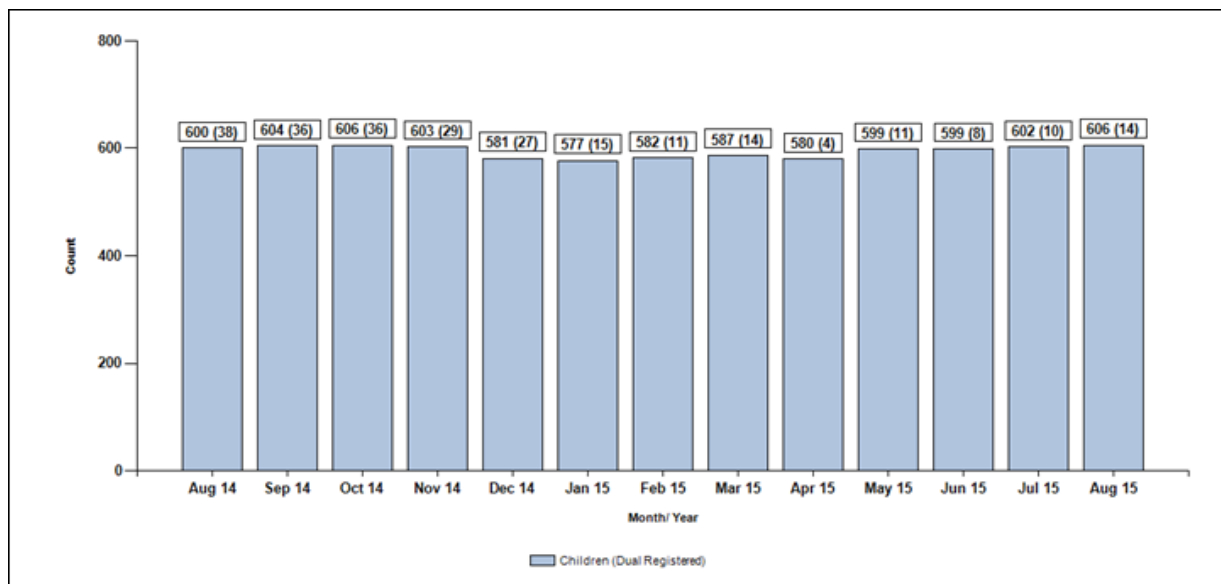
The chart below shows the activity volumes over the last few years across the service, the September figures will be updated in October 2015:

**Social Care and Early Help activity levels:**

	Contacts	Referrals	Child Protection	Looked After Children	Children In Need	CAFs open
Mar-12	1533	405	423	578	1219	94
Mar-13	1846	389	519	619	1632	1160
Mar-14	1885	677	765	630	3208	1668
Sep-14	1641	752	918	613	3112	1695
Dec-14	1933	680	810	626	3476	1786
Mar-15	2351	648	734	628	2932	2033
Apr-15	2028	539	699	604	2695	2135
May-15	2250	619	649	616	2678	2161
June -15	2720	861	617	600	2892	2135

## **Theme 6 - Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency**

The number of Looked After Children continues to be relatively stable, being 606 at the end of August 2015. The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last twelve months.



An update on Adoption and Permanency was presented to the Improvement Board on 2 October 2015. 12 children are currently waiting to be placed and 24 adopters are yet to be linked, the mis-match depends on what adopters are approved for.

The DfE remarked in July 2015 that our progress 79% of children who waited less than 19 months between entering care and being placed with adopters (A3) was very good. This is a significant improvement on 46% in 2012/13.

Coventry still has some legacy cases, which are cases that take longer than the average. Coventry does have one of the most effective operating models, which reduces the delay for children.

22 children were adopted between 1 April 2015 and 30 September 2015. A further 48 children were placed for adoption. The projection for the number of adoptions this year is 60 – higher than was originally predicted and this does not reflect the national trend, which is a downturn in the number of Adoption Orders made.

The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last few years.

Number of children Adopted	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of children adopted	28	40	52	70	Up to 30 September 2015 <b>22</b> Children were adopted – (1 April – 30 September 2015.) and 48 placed

Recruitment of in-house foster carers remains a very high priority in that more children are placed with Independent Fostering Agencies than with in-house carers. Recruitment is being targeted at those who can foster children within the age ranges that are needed. A range of initiatives are in place to improve recruitment.

The tables below shows the position at Quarter 1 April – June 2015 for foster carers, this information is updated quarterly and will be updated in October for Quarter 2.

### Fostering Scorecard Households & Capacity:

Quarter	Approved Households	Places	Places Filled (%)	Places On Hold or Blocked (%)	Places Vacant (%)
Q1	147	236	136 (57.6%)	53 (19.9%)	47 (22.5%)

**Please Note:** Due to naturally occurring delays in recording information and the complexities in compiling this data, figures provided in the above table should read as an 'as at' figure, based on what was audited when the report was run. Unlike other tables in this scorecard, previous quarters' data will NOT be re-adjusted in subsequent scorecards prior to being fully audited again at year-end.

Quarter	New Foster Carer Households Approved	Places Gained	Foster Carer Households Deregistered	Places Lost	Net Households	Net Places
Q1	2	2	5	11	-3	-9
YTD	2	3	5	11	-3	-9

**Please Note:** Due to the timeliness of recording, figures for previous quarters may change in subsequent scorecards.

### Recruitment Activity:

Month	Initial Enquiries	Initial Visits	Assessments Started (Stage 1)	Assessments Started (Stage 2)
Q1	65	10	16	4
Total	65	10	16	4

### Enquiry & Assessment Outcomes: Initial Enquiries:

Outcome	Q1	YTD
NFA	54	54
Stage 1	16	16

### Assessments (Stage 1):

Outcome	Q1	YTD
NFA	7	7
Stage 2	4	4

### Assessments (Stage 2):

Outcome	Q1	YTD
NFA	0	0
Panel	2	2

Elected Members are committed to assisting with raising awareness of fostering and attracting new applicants. The Fostering Steering Group continues to focus on increasing the number of approved foster carers and children placed.

The progress of cases of children subject to Care Proceedings is tracked by the Case Progression Officer. The introduction of this post has helped to reduce timescales for

Proceedings and has moved “legacy” cases on. In June 2014 the average length of Proceedings was 42.1 weeks. This had decreased to 36 weeks by June 2015. It is predicted that the length of Proceedings will reduce further to 29 weeks by the end of the calendar year.

The Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) first court date will be 20 October 2015. Training has taken place for the FDAC team with Judges from the Coventry Court, and partners from the Tavistock Clinic and Coram, as well as voluntary and health agencies

## **6 Communication**

- 6.1 The Council’s website and Beacon/Intranet is updated to include current progress. New and emerging priorities for the directorate and the organisation means a new approach to communications is needed to demonstrate the directorates’ work as part of the wider organisation; a priority now to share messages across the Council to emphasise the importance of working corporately and not in silos.
- 6.2 A new e-newsletter will be launched focusing on Children’s Services ahead of Ofsted re-inspection. This will be issued to all staff in Children’s Services, all partners, senior managers, Members to ensure everyone is aware of the progress made so far, what’s still to be achieved and the role all employees can play in supporting the service in achieving a better Ofsted result

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## Appendix 1

### A One Page Summary of the Children's Services Improvement Plan March 2015

*Note: Themes 1-5 theme are aligned to the DfE notice, the additional theme highlights services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency*



### Key Challenges

**Sustainability** - managing future work volumes, resourcing and sustainability of improvements

**Evidencing Impact** - evidencing improvements and the impact on achieving good outcomes for children, young people and families

