



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

10th December 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

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 18 November 2015. The report is based on data from October 2015, unless stated otherwise. The next Improvement Board will be held on 6 January 2016.

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) Note the recommendations from the LGA Peer Review

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 27th June 2014. A revised and updated Improvement Plan was published on 10th 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.

The Department for Education issued an Improvement Notice on 30th June 2014. The Improvement notice is reviewed every six months by the Department for Education. A six month review took place on 20th January 2015 and the twelve month review took place on 30th June and 1st July 2015. 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. The

LGA completed a Safeguarding Practice Diagnostic in October, the results of the peer review are summarised in Theme 3.

- 3.3 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
- 3.4 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 18 November 2015.

Theme 1 – Early Help and Partnership

The operational delivery of the draft Early Help Strategy continues.

The Citywide roll-out for Acting Early is now complete. The Project was designed to improve the capacity and capability of parents and carers, enabling them to support the health and development of their children. It centres on developing and embedding a new model of delivery. The monitoring of impact and improvements continues. The project has achieved the following positive results:

- Creation of integrated teams
- Facilitating earlier intervention
- Regular integrated team meetings, for sharing information and facilitating multi-agency working
- Improved handover between midwives and health visitors
- Improved engagement with other professionals, and improved understanding of one another's roles
- Redesigned information sharing
- Joint training opportunities
- Maximised early child development, nutrition and readiness for school

As at 31 October 2015, Health hold 4.3% of CAF's, work continues to increase the proportion of CAF's undertaken by all agencies. A review of the CAF Co-ordinator role and function is underway, and will be finalised by the end of December 2015, with the emphasis in redesign having CAF Co-ordinators attached to Schools to support school staff to hold appropriate risk

and ensure that contacts into social care do not increase unnecessarily, particularly before school holidays.

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.

The recommendations of the Independent Review of the Coventry MASH have been considered by the MASH board. The key recommendations have been accepted and are in the process of being implemented. The report has been shared with the West Midlands Police and there are further discussions about implementing recommendations that relate specifically to the Police.

The LSCB Chair Janet Mokades presented her findings on the arrangements for strategy discussions. The Chair confirmed that there was no evidence to state that strategy discussions are not compliant. Further work on single agency and multi-agency processes to make them better, smoother and more effective has been suggested.

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 29.7% is a significant increase on the 21.5% recorded in 2014/15. Further work including dip sampling is being undertaken to explore this further.

The CSE delivery plan is in place and continued progress is being made across the city with all partners with co-ordination being led through the CSE sub groups. CSE and missing processes have been separated to allow a focus on both risk areas. This will allow a greater preventative and early help approach to risk factors at the earliest point.

The Police have commissioned work on missing and will be undertaking a lot of work through the sub groups to ensure this work is co-ordinated and that issues are raised effectively.

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 18 November 2015:

Figures for children missing from home, care and education are now available. There is now a single named point of reference for this information. The Board's overall merged policy and procedures for all missing children and young people have been circulated for pre-approval and comment.

Subgroup Meetings continue to run smoothly and to schedule. Subgroups are on track with their planned work. Attendance is good and members continue to take action as agreed and to timetable. Partners are working together effectively in all these groups.

The policy and procedures subgroup has produced and circulated three important documents. One is a revised missing policy, brought together from the missing from home and care and the missing education policy. The forced marriage policy has been reviewed by legal services to

reflect the need to consider the issues of siblings when forced marriage is a risk. In response to an SCR recommendation, a new policy has been written for working with hard to engage families.

Work continues to improve multi-agency practice and single agency audit. There is some good work being undertaken and some aspects of multi-agency practice that need further work.

The Board's Quality and Effectiveness subgroup has recently carried out a multi-agency audit of some CSE cases. The results have been analysed and will be presented to the next LSCB board. The detailed analysis of the Board's wider safeguarding workforce survey has not yet been undertaken but it is clear from the preliminary work that there will be significant issues to be followed up.

Following the Board's July event on strategy discussions, a recall meeting was held in October to evaluate how well the new processes are working. There has been some progress but there is still more work to be done.

The production of the Board's annual report 2014-15 has been completed. The report evaluates current outcomes for Coventry children and the work that has been undertaken by services to tackle safeguarding issues in the city over the last twelve months. It indicates where more needs to be undertaken and outlines a possible direction for the Board over the next year.

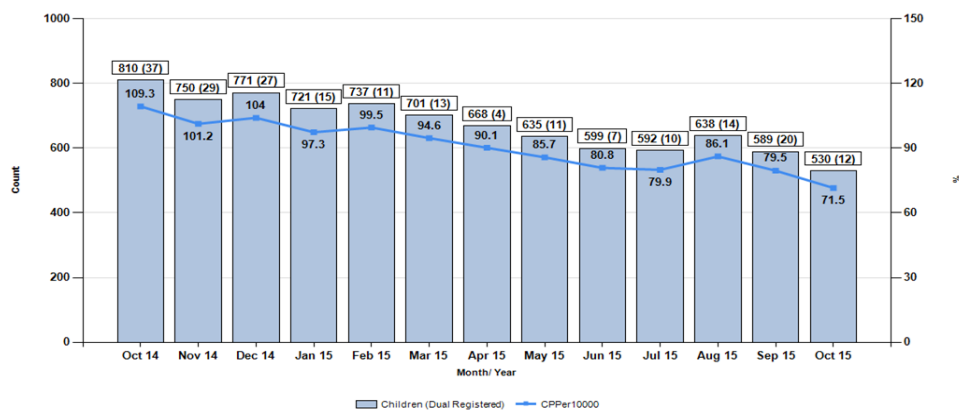
Theme 3 - Quality and Effectiveness of Practice

Work is underway to revise the current Workforce Strategy. Shokat Lal, Assistant Director, Human Resources and Workforce Services, provided an update to the Improvement Board on 18 November 2015, highlighting work that is currently taking place that will inform the strategy.

Further work to understand why staff stay and leave social worker posts and the impact of agency staff in the future is being undertaken. The revised workforce strategy will include a revised offer for retention and alternative methods for recruiting social workers in the future, training and development and clear career pathways for staff.

"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 continues to decrease but at a slower pace, 530 at the end of October 2015, see table below. 82.8% of children who had been on a Child Protection Plan for over 6 weeks had received a Statutory Child Protection Visit in the 6 weeks preceding the end of October. Dashboards are being developed to help monitor statutory visits.



Timeliness of Children and Families assessments undertaken has continued to be above 90% since May 2015.

The Local Government Association completed a Safeguarding Practice Diagnostic Peer Review in October 2015. The diagnostic forms part of the sector support offer to assist councils in taking timely and appropriate action to address areas of concern.

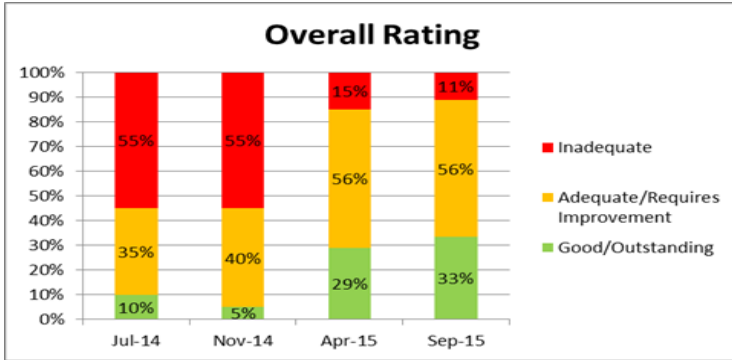
The following **Key Lines of Enquiry** were agreed:

- 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?

The review concluded that Children’s Services has progressed on its improvement journey and it was evident that considerable work has been undertaken to improve case work. The front door, referral and assessment service and independence conference chair service has moved from a period of crisis to one of stability. The main themes highlighted in the review included consistency and quality of practice; workforce capacity and stabilising the workforce. Although progress is being made in the right direction, the biggest challenge is consistency of practice. The improvements identified in the Peer review will be embedded within the existing Improvement Plan.

Theme 4 - Quality Assurance and Audit

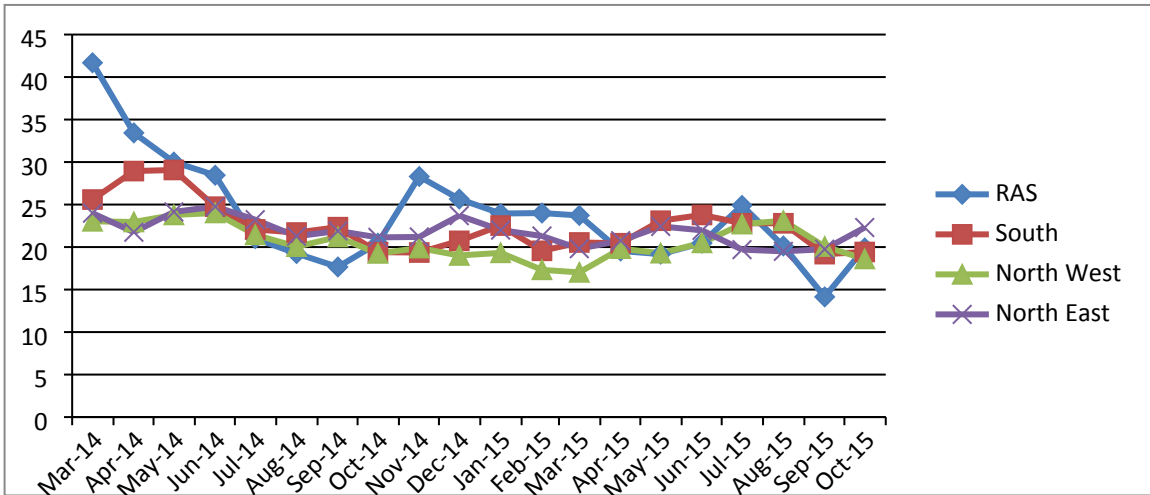
The current Quality Assurance framework for both the LSCB and Council was presented to Board on 18th November 2015. The Council have a regular system of audit in place and in the graph below show improvements in practice on judgements that auditors are making.



The current QA framework is not broad enough and needs to be revised. A revised Quality Assurance Framework will be presented to the Improvement Board in January along with the LSCB programme of multi-agency audits for the next 12-18 months.

Theme 5 - Leadership and Governance

Caseloads in the Referral and Assessment service (RAS) averaged 20 at the end of October 2015 and remain within target (20-25). Caseloads in the Neighbourhood teams averaged 18 to 22 at the end of the October 2015.



Caseloads for Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO'S) have significantly reduced and have stabilised at 76 over the last few months compared with 129 in October 2014.

Social Workers are receiving regular supervision, 71% (254) staff received supervision in September 2015. The 29% (103) 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 and this is being reviewed to reflect a more accurate position based on the number of staff available for supervision.

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 feed in to the Member Task and Finish Group, which will be completing its work in November.

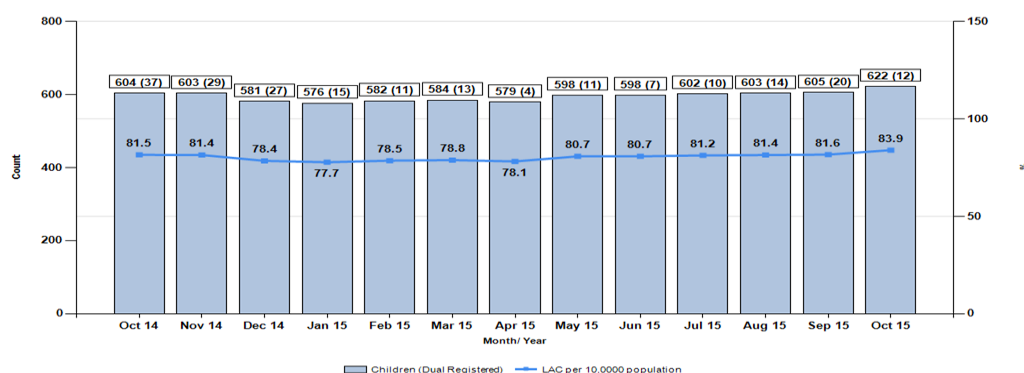
The chart below shows the activity volumes over the last few years across the service up to 30 September 2015:

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
Sept -15	1820	538	578	613	2308	1964

Theme 6 - Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency

The number of Looked After Children continues to be relatively stable, at 622 at the end of October 2015. The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last twelve months.



25 children were adopted between 1 April 2015 and 30 October 2015. A further 41 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	25 up to 30 October 2015

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 2 July- September 2015 for foster carers:

**Fostering Scorecard
Households & Capacity:**

Quarter	Approved Households	Places	Places Filled (%)	Places On Hold or Blocked (%)	Places Vacant (%)
Q1	147	236	136 (57.6%)	53 (22.7%)	45 (19.2%)
Q2	151	258	152(58.9%)	64 (24.8%)	42 (16.3%)

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. The number of places can fluctuate, as additional places can be temporarily approved for existing households (i.e. additional siblings). These should not be confused with the below, which pertain to official places approved at the time of registration /de-registration.

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
Q2	6	8	2	5	+1	+3
YTD	8	10	7	16	+1	-6

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

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. At 29th October 2015 the upward projection has continued with 156 children in in house foster care. This means we currently have 25% of the LAC population placed with LA foster care which is an improvement from Q1 which recorded 136 in placement.

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. The Ministry of Justice have recently published the actual figures (as at end of September 2015) the average case duration has reduced further and is currently 25.3 weeks.

The first case heard in the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) was held on 20 October 2015.

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; apriority now to share messages across the Council to emphasise the importance of working corporately and not in silos.
- 6.2 A new e-newsletter was launched at the beginning of November 2015 focusing on Children’s Services ahead of Ofsted re-inspection. This is 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



