



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

25th February 2016

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 6th January 2016. The report is based on data from November 2015, unless stated otherwise. The next Improvement Board will be held on 17th February 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 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.
- 3.3 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. An eighteen month review was held on 2nd February 2016. The outcome of the review will be confirmed in a letter by the Minister in the next few weeks.
- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 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
- 3.6 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 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 6th January 2016.

6 Theme 1 – Early Help and Partnership

- 6.1 In November last year, 68.4% of all Common Assessment Frameworks – known as CAFs - successfully achieved their outcomes. The Council are responsible for 70% of all CAFs and external agencies make up the other 30%. Eight CAF co-ordinators will support pyramids/cohorts of schools, over the next twelve months, and will deliver advice, consultation and bespoke training, to support schools to feel confident to hold appropriate levels of risk.
- 6.2 There has been a steady rise in the number of re-referrals since April 2015, this remains at 27%, and is still high when considering the reduction of contacts. An audit of the re-referrals has been completed to ensure that the appropriate step up, and management of risk at lower levels of intervention is in place. The outcome of the audit will be discussed at the Improvement Board meeting on 17th February 2016.
- 6.3 In phase 1 of the Strengthening Families programme 632 families have children with improved attendance and behaviours at school.
- 6.4 The recommendations of the Independent Review of the Coventry Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub – the MASH - have been incorporated into an action plan and are being implemented.
- 6.5 The Child Sexual Exploitation – 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 group.
- 6.6 The police have commissioned work on missing children and are working through the sub group to ensure this is co-ordinated and that issues are raised in the right place at the right time.
- 6.7 A total of 2,380 Children in Need cases are open to Social Care.

7 Theme 2 - Local Safeguarding Children Board

7.1 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.

7.2 The following progress was reported to the Improvement Board on 6 January 2016:

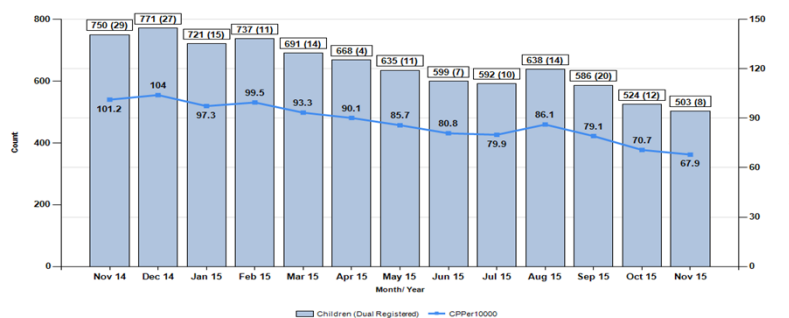
- i) Further work has been undertaken to link the CSE work completed by the voluntary and statutory sectors. The LSCB Board organised a follow up CSE learning event at which a wide range of statutory and voluntary services and organisations learned about each other's work and services. Particular attention was paid to identifying support that is available for young people affected by CSE when they reach the age of transition at 18 and lose the right to statutory support. The information gathered at this event is now available on the CSCB website in the form of a directory.
- ii) This CSE event demonstrated that there has been significant progress since the previous event in June. Awareness of CSE and of how to recognise and respond to it has advanced but there is still further work to be completed to improve information sharing and communication around casework and to link services and projects
- iii) Subgroup Meetings continue to run smoothly and to schedule. Subgroups are on track with their planned work. The training and workforce development subgroup review should be completed in the new year. Attendance is good and members continue to take action as agreed and to timetable. Partners are working together effectively in all these groups.
- iv) The Board's Quality and Effectiveness subgroup has now completed its analysis of the wider safeguarding workforce survey. The findings overall were positive with most responders feeling that they knew who to contact if they had safeguarding concerns, had sufficient time to do their safeguarding work and were satisfied with management support.
- v) Work continues to improve multi-agency practice and single agency audit. It is clear that there is some good work is being undertaken but there are also aspects of multi-agency practice that are still uneven and lacking in rigour.
- vi) The Board's annual report has now been published and is on the CSCB website. The report evaluates the progress of the Board over the year Sept 2014 to Sept 2015 and sets out its view of the current state of safeguarding in Coventry. It notes significant progress in getting the right help to children who need it in a timely fashion and a reduction in serious incidents requiring SCRs. It 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 direction for the Board over the next year.

8 Theme 3 - Quality and Effectiveness of Practice

8.1 The Workforce Strategy has been revised to reflect the workforce needs of Coventry Children's Services. It builds on the progress the service has made over the last two years and supports the aim of achieving capacity, capability and culture needed to face organisational challenges. The strategy embraces the priority of Coventry Children's

Services to put children and young people at the centre of all our work. A separate report on progress with the Workforce Strategy will be presented to Scrutiny Board on 25th February 2016.

- 8.2 Children’s Services has developed a clear and enticing brand for social work in Coventry in order to ensure a continual supply of qualified and experienced social workers. The new recruitment campaign “We’re With You” went live on 11th February 2016. The micro –site has also been re-designed to make it more dynamic and user friendly and social media has been utilised to attract qualified and experienced social workers to Coventry. A market supplement of £5,000 is being offered to staff working in the hard-to-recruit areas of the service e.g.
- 8.3 Referral and Assessment Service and Neighbourhood teams.
- 8.4 The number of children subject to a Child Protection plan continues to reduce, 503 as at the end of November 2015. The number dual registered has reduced from 29 this time last year to 8. The reduction is due to a more robust process in relation to children on plans who become looked after being removed from the plan quickly. See table below:



- 8.5 The majority of Children and Family assessments are completed within 11-29 days, this illustrates that managers are actively reviewing assessments and ensuring that they are concluded within appropriate
- 8.6 The Department for Education reviewed progress against the Children’s Services Improvement Plan and Improvement Notice on Tuesday 2 February 2016.
- 8.7 The focus was on Looked After Children. The visit included meeting young people in care and care leavers and focus groups with foster carers, adopters, social workers and team managers. The Minister will be reporting the outcome of the review shortly.

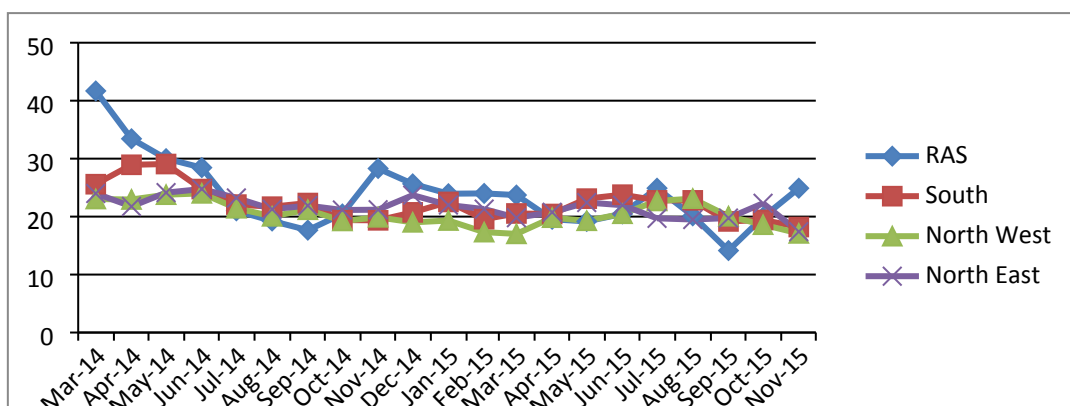
9 Theme 4 - Quality Assurance and Audit

- 9.1 The Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Framework have been revised. It focuses specifically on casework services for children provided by children’s social care and early help services. It focuses on quality assurance that underpins continuous improvement. It is the aim of this framework to deliver improved outcomes through a wide range of indicators of quality. Assuring quality of practice is essential to the provision of a good service to the children and young people of Coventry. A revised Audit schedule for 2016 is included in the framework.
- 9.2 Over 100 cases have been audited during January 2016, the results of the audits will inform quality of practice and will be presented to the Improvement Board on 17th February 2016.

10 Theme 5 - Leadership and Governance

- 10.1 Caseloads in the Referral and Assessment service (RAS) averaged 24 at the end of November 2015 and remain within target (20-25). Caseloads in the Neighbourhood teams

averaged 17-18 at the end of the November 2015 showing improvement against a target of (20-22).



10.2 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.

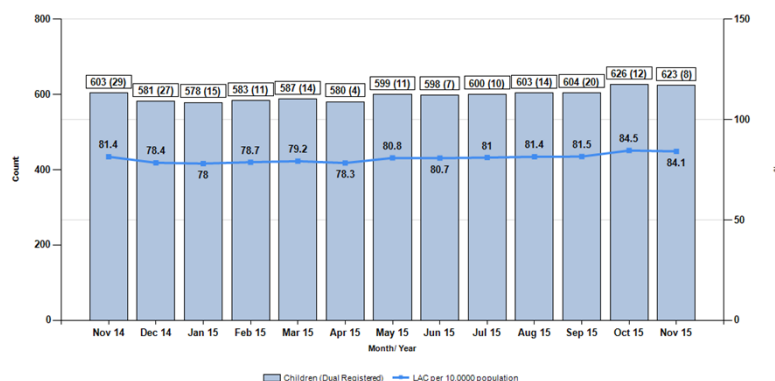
10.3 The chart below shows the activity volumes over the last few years across the service up to 30 November 2015:

10.4 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
Jun-15	2720	861	617	600	2892	2135
Sep-15	1820	538	578	613	2308	1964
Nov-15	2565	677	503	629	2432	1948

11 Theme 6 - Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency

11.1 LAC numbers have gradually increased over the last year. Currently this is 623 in November compared with 603 in November last year. The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last twelve months.



11.2 As at 30 November 2015, 27 children have been adopted and 44 placed. The projection for the number of adoptions this year is 50 – higher than was originally predicted and this does not reflect the national trend, which is a downturn in the number of Adoption Orders made.

11.3 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	27 up to 30 November 2015

11.4 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.

11.5 The tables below shows the position at Quarter 2 July- September 2015 for foster carers, the Quarter 3 position will be updated and included in a future report.

**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%)

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

11.6 Elected Members continue to be 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.

12 Communication

12.1 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. In addition to this the Director of Children's Services complete a weekly blog.

12.2 Authors:

Sonia Watson, Children's Improvement Plan Project Manager,

John Gregg, Director of Children's Services

Contact details: john.gregg@coventry.gov.uk
sonia.watson@coventry.gov.uk

Tel: (024) 7683 3402

Tel: (024) 7683 1890

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

