



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

17th March 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 17th February 2016. The report is based on data from January 2016, unless stated otherwise. The next Improvement Board will be held on 30th March 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 shortly.

- 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 17th February 2016.

Theme 1 – Early Help and Partnership

An Early Help Action Plan has been produced to deliver forward Early Help and prevention and will be monitored via the Early Help Board.

In January 2016, 69.6% 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 are supporting schools over the next twelve months, and will commence from April 2016.

There has been a steady rise in the percentage of re-referrals since April 2015, and this is still remains, the re-referral percentage in January has remained static despite an increase in contacts. Of the 30 cases audited in January, the majority of cases had multiple referrals and without exception all could be linked to the same presenting issues from the initial referral.

The Audit findings and Action Plan will presented to the Improvement Board on 30th March 2016 and will be reported to Education and Children's Scrutiny Board on 14th April 2016 following a request for the action plan at the Scrutiny Board meeting on 25th February.

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 17 February 2016:

At the LSCB January meeting, the Board carried out a further self-evaluation against the Ofsted criteria. This built on the work completed at last year's Development Day and included confirmation that improvement action agreed last May had been completed. Some evidence of impact is emerging. The evaluation did not identify any areas that were inadequate. Where further action is needed to move things to "good" it has been incorporated into the new forward work plan for the next six months.

Following the revision of the quality systems in Children's Social Care, the LSCB Board will have better information about strengths and weaknesses in the service. This will enable sharper focusing of multi-agency audit work and better alignment of the tools and processes being used. The DCS now chairs the Effectiveness and Quality subgroup and this will ensure that recommendations arising from multi-agency audits are speedily carried through into practice.

The LSCB training subgroup has completed its development and training review and there is now a clearer picture of levels of safeguarding training across the city. There is an issue concerning domestic violence training which impacts on the Board's multi-agency DV training. Single agency basic DV training is still not being offered across the city. Partners have been asked to review numbers of staff trained and report back to the next Improvement board.

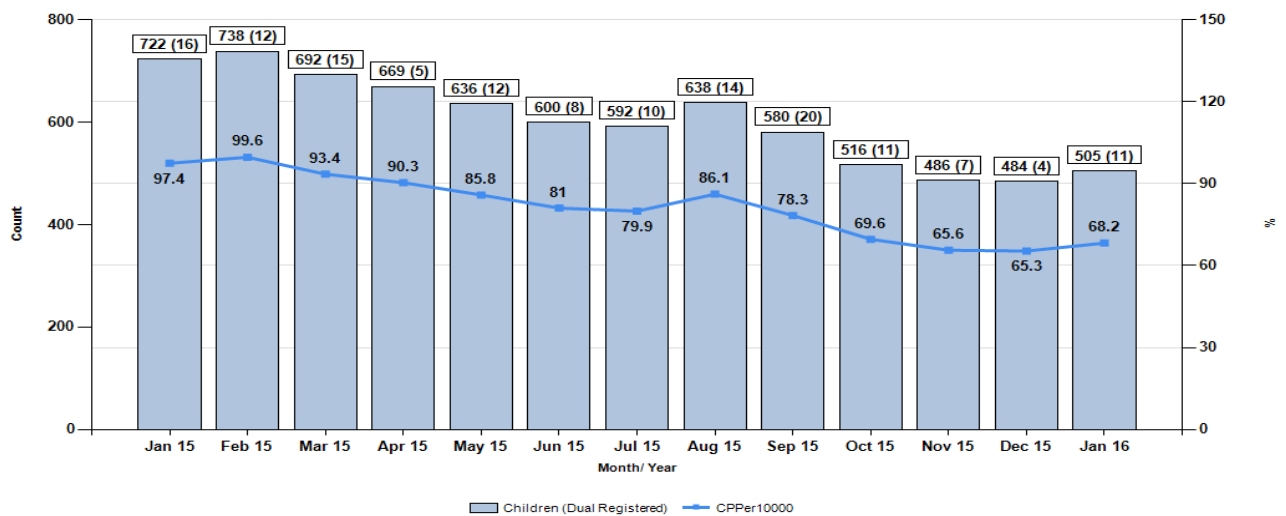
The Board's Business Management Subgroup has been given a comprehensive and fully up to date report on children missing together with some analysis of the patterns over time. This is extremely valuable and should be of great value amongst other things, in improving protection and outcomes for children at risk of or involved in, child sexual exploitation.

Theme 3 - Quality and Effectiveness of Practice

The Workforce Strategy Action Plan is being monitored and progressed through the Workforce Development Board on a monthly basis.

The new recruitment campaign "We're With You", was designed to ensure a continual supply of qualified and experienced social workers and reduce reliance on agency workers, the 4 week campaign ended on 10th March 2016. The outcome of the campaign; work with Sanctuary and the Birmingham COMPASS jobs fair will be reported to Improvement board on 30th March 2016.

The number of children subject to a Child Protection plan has increased slightly to 505, at the end of January 2016. See table below:



Timeliness of Section 47s continues to improve and currently stands at 93.2%. This ensures that those children requiring a high level of intervention due to safeguarding concerns have a swift and prompt response.

The Department for Education reviewed progress against the Children’s Services Improvement Plan and Improvement Notice on Tuesday 2 February 2016.

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.

Theme 4 - Quality Assurance and Audit

The Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Framework 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. Assuring quality of practice is essential to the provision of a good service to the children and young people of Coventry.

In January, a review was undertaken to evaluate quality of practice across Children’s Services. A sample of 28 cases was audited. Overall the results showed that the service recognises and responds promptly to safeguarding risks including sexual and physical abuse. Management oversight of casework is well evidenced in most cases.

In the monthly case file audits for January, the majority of children in the audit were looked after, which allowed some focus on pathway plans and life story work as well as overall the quality of practice. Overall the results highlighted that practice continues to be inconsistent. There is some improvement in the voice of the child being evident throughout the work there remains a variance in the overall quality of care planning. A new more detailed audit tool was launched in February to improve the quality of audits.

From February 2016 Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO’s) are reviewing Pathway Plans for relevant and former relevant children up to their 19th birthday. This will ensure independent scrutiny and appropriate challenge.

Theme 5 - Leadership and Governance

Caseloads in the Referral and Assessment service (RAS) have increased this month due to the increase in activity, average caseloads in January were 29 against a total of 1,100 cases. Target is 20-25 average cases. A business case to increase resources to manage the increase in volumes of work is being progressed. Average caseloads in the Neighbourhood teams in January were between 17-20. Target is 20-22.

Caseloads for Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO'S) continue to reduce average caseloads in January were 70 compared with a peak of 129 in October 2014.

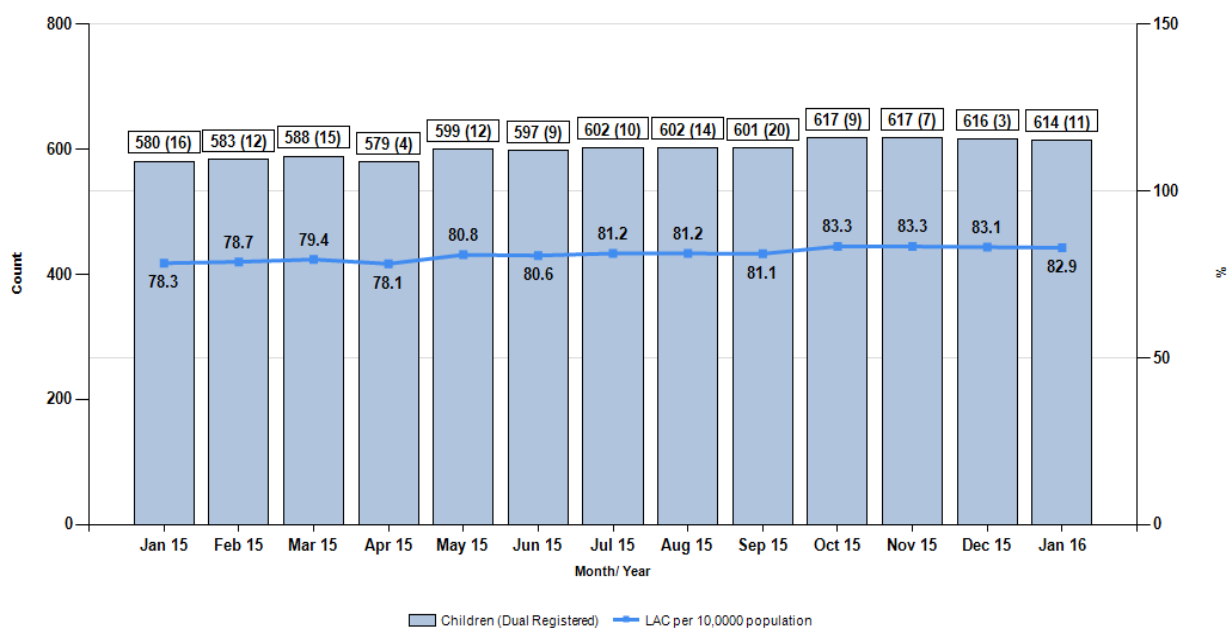
The chart below shows the activity volumes over the last few years across the service up to 31 January 2016:

Social Care and Early Help activity levels:

	Contacts	Referrals	Child Protection	Looked After Children	Children In Need	CAFs open
Mar-2	1533	405	423	578	1219	94
Mar13	1846	389	519	619	1632	1160
Mar14	1885	677	765	630	3208	1668
Sep14	1641	752	918	613	3112	1695
Dec14	1933	680	810	626	3476	1786
Mar15	2351	648	734	628	2932	2033
Apr15	2028	539	699	604	2695	2135
Jun15	2720	861	617	600	2892	2135
Sep15	1820	538	578	613	2308	1964
Nov15	2565	677	503	623	2432	1948
Dec15	1426	626	496	630	2501	1973
Jan 16	1537	678	505	614	2568	1933

Theme 6 - Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency

Looked After Children numbers reduced in January 2016 to 614 this is partially due to adoption orders secured in January 2016. The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last twelve months.



As at 31 January 2016, 37 children have been adopted and 41 placed.

The average time between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family is currently 467 days compared with 525 days in 2014/15. This is now better than the DfE target of 487 days.

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	37 up to 31 January 2016

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.

6 Communication

6.1 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 completes a weekly blog.

6.2 Authors:

Sonia Watson, Children’s Improvement Plan Project Manager,
John Gregg, Director of Children’s Services

Contact details: john.gregg@coventry.gov.uk Tel: (024) 7683 3402
sonia.watson@coventry.gov.uk 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



