



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

14th April 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 30th March 2016. The report is based on data from February 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) Note on the outcome of the 18 month DfE review held on 2 February 2016**

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. The plan has been further updated, and will be published in April 2016.
- 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 Minister has confirmed the outcome of the review in a letter dated 24 February. A summary is provided in Section 5.

- 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 30th March 2016.
- 5.2. Outcome of Department for Education Review (DfE)
- 5.3. The outcome of the review completed on 2nd February 2016 was confirmed in a letter from the Minister dated 24th February 2016.
- 5.4. The Minister's letter identified the following strengths and areas for development:

Strengths:

- Clear there has been improvements since Ofsted inspected two years ago
- Improvements particularly with regards to the MASH and the referral and assessment service
- Positive feedback on the newly appointed Director of Children Services
- Welcomed steps taken to improve auditing and quality assurance to have an impact on the quality and consistency of practice although seen too late in the improvement cycle
- Encouraged by looked after children and care leavers spoken to who were aware and had met the Director at the Looked After Children awards ceremony
- Pleased children's voices are heard at all level

Areas for development:

- Inconsistent progress
 - Systemic improvements to systems and practice required
 - Concern with the high rising rate of re-referrals to social care
 - Loss of focus and pace in improvement work in 2015 prior to the appointment of new leaders
- Young people felt that further improvements around life story work, bringing their voice further into meetings and all children receive the same quality of care were required
- 5.5. The new leadership is continuing to provide the renewed focus and direction. Middle management teams are stable and committed. The new improvement partners are working at pace to help deliver the improvements and changes required

6 Theme 1 – Early Help and Partnership

- 6.1. Coventry City Council Early Help and Prevention Services hold 70% of all CAFs with external agencies making up the other 30%. Further work will be completed to redress the balance in holding CAFs by external agencies and supporting families at lower levels of intervention.
- 6.2. The outcome impact tool will go live on the 4th July 2016, when all internal Early Help staff will have been trained, pathways will be in place, mapped against ECAF to ensure robust performance management reporting is available on a monthly basis.
- 6.3. The target to increase the number of CAFs held externally to 40% will remain in place, which equates to approximately a further 500 families being supported by the CAF at level 2. This month a further 2% increase has been realised which is a further 34 CAFs held by non-LA agencies. Health partners have increased CAFs held by 8.4%, which is an improvement on last month.
- 6.4. The Head of Children's Social Care and Head of Early Help have completed an Action plan to address the issues with Step up /step down from Neighbourhoods to Early Help from the Re-referral Audit completed in February 2016. A new process has been developed and will be implemented from the end of March 2016, which will support the processes to step down from the Neighbourhoods.
- 6.5. There has been a steady rise in the percentage of Re-referrals since April 2015 and still remains at 28.9% when comparing the Re-referral rate with Statistical Neighbours and the England average it is high and also higher than in previous years. New processes are in place and progress will reported at the next Improvement Board in May 2016.
- 6.6. The MASH review Action Plan has been formulated and is being implemented.
- 6.7. Contacts in February reduced to its lowest in the last 12 months at 1320. This can be accounted for due to school holidays and also the shorter month. It is still significantly lower than the equivalent time last year. Education is still the main referrer.
- 6.8. There has been a decrease in the overall number of missing episodes at 61, relating to 33 children, of which 22 are Looked After Children (LAC) and 11 are living at home. 22 young people had a return home interview (RHI) – which equates to 64.7%. 72.7% of those RHI completed were in timescale. Further work is on-going to analyse the information contained in the RHI to understand the patterns and trends in respect of missing and to ensure performance is robust.

- 6.9. An update was presented jointly by the Police and Children's Social Care on Child Sexual Exploitation/Children Missing at the Improvement Board on 30th March 2016.

7 Theme 2 - Local Safeguarding Children Board

- 7.1. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board 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 30 March 2016:

The final self- evaluation document evidences good progress on completion of improvement action over the last six months. The Board is clear about what needs to be completed over the next six months. There needs to be a strong focus on dissemination of what has been learned from the voice of the child, from SCRs and from Peer Review Panels. New ways of getting the messages to influence practice will be developed and the impact on outcomes for children then will be evaluated. Clearer findings are emerging from the combination of a more focused quality assurance system in CSC with a streamlined multi-agency audit system to keep improving the consistency of practice.

The February peer review panel on families who are hard to engage produced some evidence of good practice across the workforce in engaging families. The Board's multi-agency training on hard to engage families will be revised and given a wider focus. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board will produce a summary overview of practice with some good practice examples and recommendations for all services. These developments will ensure the thinking and learning from the panel is more widely known and influential in developing and improving practice.

The Board's named GP has made very good progress in refining processes between Early Help, Child protection and primary care. The GP lead has also organised safeguarding forums for GP leads and practice managers and evening educational sessions on safeguarding matters. A Frequently Asked Questions in GP Safeguarding document has been developed and helps to guide practices on common problems.

The Board's 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.

At the request of the Chief Executive, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Chair has agreed to remain in post as Chair until the end of July. This will ensure that there will be a handover period during which the new Chair is inducted.

8 Theme 3 - Quality and Effectiveness of Practice

- 8.1. The Workforce Strategy Action plan is being progressed through a monthly Workforce Board.

- 8.2. The “We’re With You” campaign commenced on 11th February and ended on 15th March 2016. The 4 week campaign generated over 15,000 clicks via social media links/channels. In addition to the campaign, Sanctuary provided CV’s from experienced social workers from their database.
- 8.3. Coventry also participated in the COMPASS jobs Fair in Birmingham on 16th March 2016 and successfully screened a number of candidates interested in social worker posts both experienced social workers and newly qualified.

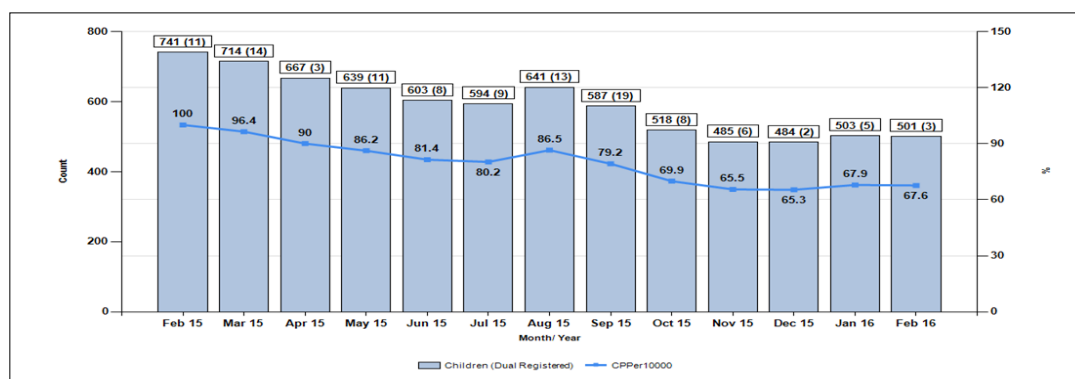
Table 1: Recruitment Activity for the period 11 February – 16 March 2016

Source of recruitment	No. of CV’s received	No. of interviews held up to 16/3/16	No of interviews arranged /in process	No. of offers during this period
TMP Recruitment campaign	17	7	1	2 experienced social workers and 1 Team Manager
Sanctuary	19	11	1	1 experienced social worker
Other agencies	4	1	3	
Internal candidates	5	2	0	1 Team Manager 1 Newly Qualified Social Workers
Compass Jobs Fair	140 people registered on the day	68 informal interview	61 in the process	
NQSW’s applying for posts	26 (3 adult area)	1	22 in process	1 Newly Qualified Social Worker
Total	211	90	88	A total of 8 offers: 3 experienced Social Workers 2 Team Managers 2 Newly Qualified Social Workers

- 8.4. The link to the campaign <http://www.coventryiswithyou.co.uk/> will remain live on West Midlands Jobs. Options are currently being reviewed to develop a microsite in house with the additional resources provided by Workforce Development who have appointed a social media lead.
- 8.5. The review of the campaign was discussed at the Workforce Development Board on 22 March 2016 a range options have been agreed and will be developed further.

The number of children subject to a Child Protection plan has stabilised at 501. Table 2 below highlights numbers over the last 12 months:

Table 2: Child Protection Plans



9 Theme 4 - Quality Assurance and Audit

- 9.1. 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.
- 9.2. Action plans arising from audits are monitored by the Head of Safeguarding and managers are held to account. In February a Placement Stability audit, Annexe A data list audit and the monthly case file audits were completed.
- 9.3. The increase in the cases audited judged to be "inadequate" is a result of a more robust approach to audit. The Director of Children Services expectations alongside audit moderation by the Head of Safeguarding has highlighted weaknesses in auditing as well as practice.
- 9.4. This is likely to continue for some time whilst expectations are re-set and are embedded into practice. The work being undertaken to audit for impact will improve over time but in the short term will highlight greater areas for improvement.
- 9.5. From February, there has also been a change to the Social Care Audit Tool which will provide more information to assist with service improvement.
- 9.6. An audit of the current private fostering arrangements is underway and will be completed by the end of March 2016. Planned audits for the next three months in addition to the regular monthly audits include; supervision audit, section 47 (No further action) outcome, care plans. The outcomes of these audits will continue to inform further development, training and workshops (closing the audit loop).

10 Theme 5 - Leadership and Governance

- 10.1. Average caseloads in Referral and Assessment Service are currently 28, slightly above the target range of 20-25, which is due to the volume of work. Average caseloads in Neighbourhoods are being maintained 17-20, against a target of 20-22.
- 10.2. Caseloads for Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO'S) continue to reduce- average caseloads in February were 65 compared with a peak of 129 in October 2014.
- 10.3. The chart overleaf (Table 3) shows the activity volumes over the last few years across the service up to end of February 2016:

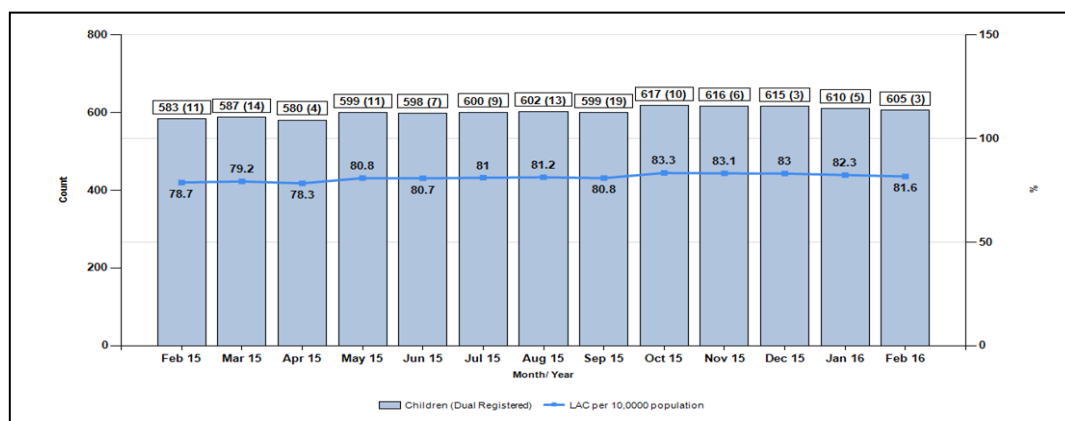
Table 3: Social Care and Early Help activity levels:

	Contacts	Referrals	Child Protection	Looked After Children	Children In Need	CAFs open
Mar-2	1533	405	423	578	1219	1050
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
Feb-16	1320	648	501	605	2502	1947

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

11.1. Looked After Children numbers reduced in February 2016 to 605 this is partially due to adoption orders secured in January 2016. The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last twelve months.

Table 4: Number of Looked After Children



11.2. The number of children placed in Children's Homes is currently 14.2%, this is above the All England average and above the most recent benchmarking figure for the West Midlands and our Statistical Neighbours plans are in place to reduce this.

11.3. The number of children with 3 or more moves has increased and is above national average. An audit of 25% of children in this cohort has been undertaken and measures are in place to reduce the risk of placement moves.

11.4. During the period February 2015-February 2016, more children are entering care (254) compared with the number leaving care (207) although the number of children entering

care has decreased, not as many children are exiting the care system by virtue of age or other forms of permanency.

- 11.5. The draft Placement Sufficiency Strategy was presented to Improvement Board on 30th March 2016 outlining the strategic approach to commissioning placements for looked After Children.
- 11.6. As at 18 March 2016, 52 children have been adopted. 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. The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last few years.

Table 5: Number of Children Adopted

Number of children Adopted	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of children adopted	28	40	52	70	As at 31 March 2016, 54 children have been adopted and 33 placed for adoption.

- 11.7. 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 has 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 regular blog.

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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



