



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

16 June 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 11th May 2016. The report is based on data from March 2016, unless stated otherwise. The next Improvement Board will be held on 22nd June 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. The plan has been further updated, and will be reviewed again at the end of June 2016.
- 3.2 The Children's Services Improvement Board Chair Mark Rogers, Chief Executive at Birmingham City Council, stepped down from the role as Independent Chair on 11th May 2016. The new incoming Chair Steve Hart has been appointed to this role and will chair the first Board on 22nd June 2016. 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.

- 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

The Children's Services Improvement Plan, 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

The following progress was reported at the Children's Services Improvement Board on 11th May 2016.

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.

The key priorities for 2016/17 are listed below and will be subject to a review with the new incoming Independent Chair, a revised Improvement Plan will be produced to reflect the new priorities going forward:

- Maintaining a focus on sustainable improvement
- Maintaining a relentless focus on consistency and quality of practice
- Getting the Early Help Strategy working so we can step cases down safely
- Delivering a Workforce Strategy and reduce reliance on agency staff to ensure sufficiently qualified staff
- Accommodate the impact of the Ofsted re-inspection so not to distract long term improvement
- Recognise the potential changes following the Ofsted inspection
- Children's Services re-design to support improved impact and outcomes for children
- Develop a Children's Services Strategy for the future
- Refreshing our approach to Corporate Parenting and Placement Sufficiency Strategy
- Strengthening our commitment to our children

Theme 1 – Early Help and Partnership

Coventry City Council Early Help and Prevention Services hold 68.10% of all CAFs, with external agencies making up the other 31.9%. The number of CAF's held by external agencies is improving as further work is completed to redress the balance, the target is 40%.

The issue to address step up/step down between children's social care and early help is being progressed. Meetings have been held with Service Managers from Neighbourhoods and Early Help and Prevention, good progress is being made the new arrangements commenced on the 3rd May 2016. Review meetings are set up fortnightly for the first three months to ensure consistency and to resolve any issues.

The percentage of re-referrals, though high has begun to reduce and is a similar percentage to May 2015, following the implementation of new methods of reviewing contacts within the MASH. This is a direct result of the auditing of re-referrals and the action plan that has been put in place

The timeliness of contacts YTD (69.6%) has shown a slight decrease on the previous two years, this is due to the volume of contacts coming through the front door. In March 2016 only 34.7% of the contacts completed were progressed as a referral to social care. This issue is on the MASH Board agenda for further discussion

Children and Family assessments remain on track with 93.7% of assessments completed in timescale for March 2016. There is still an issue with quality, which remains variable and is being addressed via auditing and performance monitoring

There has been an increase in the number of Missing Episodes recorded since September 2015. This is in part due to improved recording, but also in awareness being raised around missing children and improved coordination between agencies. In March, 79 Missing Episodes were started, pertaining to 35 children, showing a high-level of repeat episodes. Of the Missing Episodes finalised, 57% of mispers received an RHI, of which 48% were completed within timescale.

Further work is on-going to analyse the information contained in the RHI to understand patterns and trends in respect of missing. This is due to some particular high risk young people whose missing episodes are escalating and due to their vulnerabilities they are increasingly more at risk, we review this daily with the police and are actively supporting working with commissioned services to support some of the external providers to respond more appropriately to young people's vulnerabilities.

Theme 2 - Local Safeguarding Children Board

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.

The following progress was reported to the Improvement Board on 11 May 2016:

Attention has been focused on improving the dissemination of learning from serious case reviews (SCRs), peer review panels, surveys and audits and the voice of the child.

Responses to the quality assurance questions from the last peer review panel on practice with hard to engage families have now been returned by most Board members and a summary overview of practice, with examples of good practice and recommendations on better ways of doing things, is being produced. As part of the annual review of training programmes, training on working with hard to engage families will be revised in response to what we now know about current practice in Coventry. More focus will be given to training content related to neglect in response to the latest published serious case review.

A discussion at Board about radicalisation and safeguarding at the end of last year made it clear that members wanted more information about both how to respond to radicalisation and sources of support and expertise in dealing with it. Accordingly, the Board together with Prevent organised an event. Lyng Hall School hosted the event. There was a very good uptake, with over 100 attendees from social care, schools, the voluntary sector, and CWPT.

Theme 3 - Quality and Effectiveness of Practice

Children’s Services recognises that the workforce is its most valuable resource. A key element in delivering high quality services is improving the effectiveness of the recruitment of permanent social work staff across all teams and strengthening the service’s ability to retain a high quality experienced workforce. Support, training and development of the workforce are fundamental to service innovation and improvement to help make Coventry a great place to work and live. Existing work and good practice is being consolidated by continuing to cultivate a culture of on-going learning and development.

The Strategy embraces the priority of Children’s Services to put children and young people at the centre of all its work. Human Resources and Children’s Services has developed a range of recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of good quality staff within the organization. The table below summaries activity over the last three months, 106 interviews have been held as at 3 May 2016 a total of 44 appointments have been made for experienced Social Workers/Newly Qualified Social Workers and Team Manager.

Table 1: Recruitment Activity for the period 11 February – 3 May 2016

Source of recruitment	No. of CV's received	No. of interviews held	No. of offers during this period
TMP Recruitment campaign	27	14	2 experienced Social Workers 1 Team Manager
Sanctuary	23	16	1 experienced Social Worker
Other agencies	4	4	3 Experienced Social Workers
Internal candidates	6	2	1 Team Manager 1 Newly Qualified Social Workers
Compass Jobs Fair – March 2016	140	61	23 Newly Qualified Social Workers
NQSW's applying for posts	23	2	5 Newly Qualified Social Worker
Converting agency staff to permanent	12	7	7 agency staff converted to Experienced Social Worker
Total	235	106	A total of 44 offers: 13 experienced Social Workers 2 Team Managers 29 Newly Qualified Social Workers

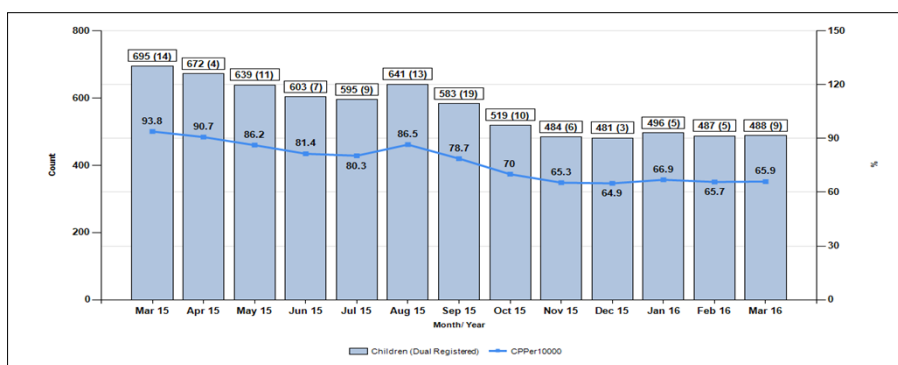
Children’s Service and Human Resources have agreed additional capacity for a social media lead to work with Children’s Services on the new recruitment initiatives. A new social media campaign was launched on 22 April 2016 via Facebook/Twitter/Google and banner advertising through Ireland. Regular monthly progress updates are provided to the Workforce Development Board on a monthly basis.

The number of children subject to a Child Protection plan has reduced and at the end of March 2016 was 488. The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 population has also reduced to 65.9 in 2015/16 compared with 93.3 in 2014/15. Although this is still above our benchmark a comparators.

Repeat plans have shown an increase. Initial analysis of this suggests a high level of ‘start-again’ syndrome in relation to neglect and a reluctance to take a more robust approach to families presenting with the same problems following multiple plans. This requires further audit and will be discussed with Heads of Services to review to agree whether a new process is required.

Table 2 below highlights numbers over the last 12 months:

Table 2: Child Protection Plans



Theme 4 - Quality Assurance and Audit

Coventry City Council Children’s Services have since November 2015 developed a stronger more robust programme of audits to inform continuous practice improvement. Audits have been undertaken by a number of different sources, including, Practice Improvement Partners and the LSCB. The outcomes of each audit have led to the construction of action plans, focused on using the findings of audits to drive up the quality of practice.

The results of audits have reinforced findings across a range of different services along the child’s journey. This has allowed for some triangulation and definitive conclusions in relation to both the strengths and weaknesses in practice across the whole of the Children’s Service.

The inconsistent quality of the actual audits, as opposed to the practice has meant work has also had to be undertaken to help managers develop skills in auditing to be able to conduct an audit with the impact on the child firmly at the centre as opposed to a task centred management audit. Mentoring and support from an experienced improvement partner has begun to develop “audit champions” who are confident and able to audit with the impact on the child being the primary focus.

Once audits have been completed, and this includes the regular monthly audits, a report is produced, detailing the findings, both in terms of areas for improvement and existing strengths. There is also a set of recommendations attached to the report. Reports are then sent to relevant Heads of Service and the Principle Social Worker. Heads of Service produce action plans which

address the areas for improvement, within their service area. Action plans are sent to the Head of Safeguarding to monitor their progress, through quarterly quality assurance meetings.

Theme 5 - Leadership and Governance

Average caseloads in RAS in March increased to 26.6, in April this reduced to an average of 21 in line with the target range of 20-25, which is due to the volume of work. Average caseloads in Neighbourhoods are being maintained at 19-21, against a target of 20-22.

IRO average caseloads continue to reduce, with average caseloads at 65 in March/April 2016.

The total number of open cases is reducing year-by-year, though it remains higher than that of our benchmark comparators. The system is monitored daily to ensure no cases become unallocated. Caseloads remain relatively stable and are within the specified target ranges. Active work within the system, such as assessments and visits are also monitored daily using the Performance Management dashboard and shows the data-timeliness is improving across the system.

Theme 6 - Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency

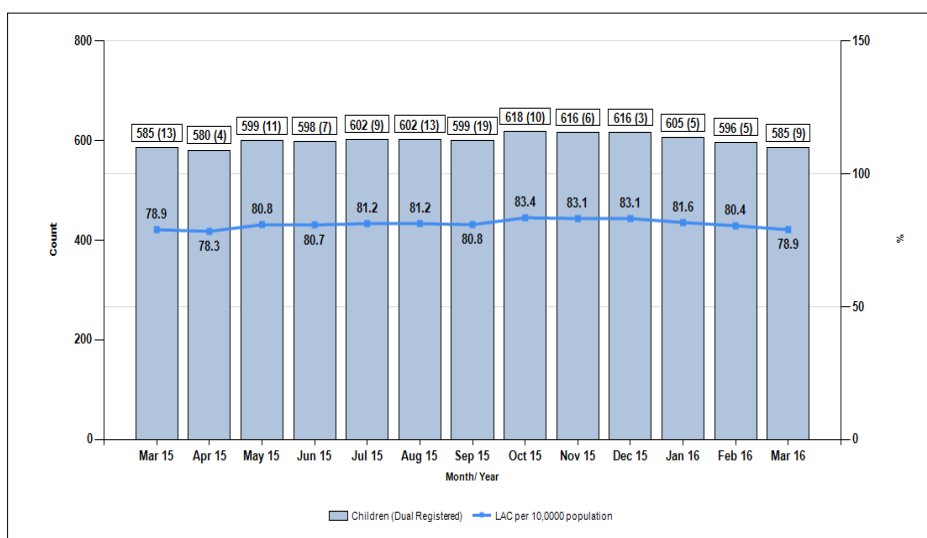
The number of children who entered care in 2015/16 has reduced since 2014/15, from 314 to 276. In 2015/16 there was a net reduction of 6 children placed in the care of the authority. This is as a result of ‘edge of care’ services being strengthened over the period.

However, the number and proportion of children re-entering care has increased in 2015/16. There has also been an increase in the proportion of children re-entering care within 1 year of having left.

The total number of children looked after by the local authority has remained relatively stable across the year, though has declined as the year progressed, 585 at the end of March 2016.

The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last twelve months for the numbers of Looked After Children.

Table 3: Number of Looked After Children



The number of children placed in Children’s Homes and secure accommodation is 13.3%. This is 4.3% above the most recent benchmarking for the All England Average and 3.3% above the

West Midlands and our Statistical Neighbours. This is currently being monitored and action plans around the sufficiency of accommodation are being put in place.

There has been a slight decline with placement moves this month. An action plan has been put in place to prevent and reduce the number of placements moves for children who are at risk of placement instability.

As at 31 March 2016, 54 children were adopted. The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last few years. The reduction in the number of children adopted in 2015/16 is a consequence of recent case law.

Table 4: 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	54

In Coventry a significant campaign to attract more in-house foster carers has been launched with an ambitious target to create 100 additional placements by the end of March 2018. The process for dealing with applicant enquiries has been changed and the carer journey has been re-engineered so as to be more customer friendly and dynamic. The results to date have been very promising with 36, 39 and 27 enquiries having been received within the past three months. This has enabled a series of initial visits and a total of 24 households to be allocated for assessment with scheduled Panel dates between June and August 2016.

A Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed to set out the rationale and associated activity which will enable better local understanding of the looked after children system and lead to improved life chances for children in and leaving the care of Coventry City Council.

6 Communication

6.1 The e-newsletter continues to be produced focusing on Children’s Services ahead of Ofsted re-inspection. This is issued to all staff in Children’s Services, all partners, senior managers and 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



