



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

8th December 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 14 November 2016. The report is based on data from October 2016, unless stated otherwise. The next Improvement Board will be held on 14th December 2016.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) Consider 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, including feedback from Ofsted and the DfE
 - 3) Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member

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. The Improvement Plan has been refreshed to take account of the priorities and focus for 2016/17. A one page summary of the improvement Plan is attached in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2 An experienced Improvement consultant and retired Her Majesty Inspector (HMI), chairs the Children's Services Improvement Board. 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 An Ofsted Monitoring Visit was undertaken on 8th and 9th November 2016, the focus of the visit was on practice within the 'help and protection' judgement with Ofsted doing a deep dive analysis (case tracking) in to six cases selected by Ofsted and one good example case selected by the service. The visit also included a visit to MASH/RAS. The outcome of the

monitoring visit is due to be published in early December 2016 and will be presented to this Scrutiny Board in January 2017.

- 3.4 The Department for Education issued an Improvement Notice on 30th June 2014. The Improvement notice is reviewed every six months. The two year review was held on 30th November 2016 and focused on quality of practice; the effectiveness of the children's services system and partnership working. The formal feedback letter from the Minister on the outcomes of the review is expected during December 2016.
- 3.5 The Council, alongside partner organisations continue a relentless focus on securing improvements in services for children, young people and families to ensure they are safeguarded and achieve positive outcomes.

4 Children's Services Improvement Plan Progress to date

- 4.1 The following progress was reported at the Children's Services Improvement Board on 14 November 2016. Improvement Progress for each theme has been highlighted in each table to highlight improvements more clearly:

4.2 Theme 1 - Early Help and Partnership Working

A summary table is highlighted for each theme highlighting progress completed since September 2016 to the current date:

Summary of Improvement Progress:

- ❖ Initial Contact Service implemented
- ❖ CAF Co-ordinators attached to Schools
- ❖ "Steps to Change" newly developed outcome impact tool is being used
- ❖ Increased intelligence of children who go missing

- 4.3 The reconfiguration of the "front door", which aims to divert families into early help who don't require a social care assessment was implemented in September 2016. The Initial Contact Service is located "in front" of the MASH and assessment services and staffed on a multi-disciplinary basis; workers consider the presenting needs of children and young people and direct them accordingly. This has resulted in significant increase in children being held by eCAF and a reduction in those unnecessarily being progressed to an assessment. This supports the service intention to deliver the right service at the right time in the right place.
- 4.4 From the outset, the City Council has been committed to ensuring that children and young people subject to contacts receive the most appropriate and timely service. Recent history shows that too many young people and children were being misdirected for an assessment. This trend has been reversed with the impact of the new single point of contact service resulting in 25.1% of contacts in September diverted to eCAF compared to 8.4% in April 2016. The service confidently expect that this trend will continue.
- 4.5 Eight CAF coordinators are attached to eighty primary schools to undertake work to build the quality of the assessment and support schools at lower levels of intervention. The effect of this work is less (588) contacts into social care from schools compared to the previous year.
- 4.6 The Early Help strategy has the oversight from Early Help Board members who are representatives from a wide range of partners. At the Improvement Board on 14th November 2016 a presentation between the Head of Early Help and Prevention and Head of a Secondary School articulated the benefits of working in partnership across the Acting Early Sites and the impact this had on his pupils.

- 4.7 In October 2016 Intensive Family Support workers supported 145 children and families across 52 families. In November 2016 time dedicated to the voluntary sector will support mainstreaming and embedding the ethos of The Strengthening Families programme by using best practice case studies with voluntary sector practitioners.
- 4.8 The Steps to Change outcome and impact tool, pilot project has been tested and validated. The analysis indicates that parents have an increased understanding of how their own behaviour influences their children's development. There are key components of learning that demonstrates the greatest breadth of change in their behaviours and from the analysis these are: a greater understanding of how to keep their children safe and secure, the importance of children's emotional well-being and the difference that positive role modelling can have on their children's behaviour. A training package for staff is currently being sourced; training begins in February 2017 with full implementation in March 2017.
- 4.9 Missing response and Return Home Interviews (RHI) has improved dramatically with over 90% of RHI completed in timescale and a higher percentage of RHI being completed, linked with a qualitative understanding of the cohort of children who do not receive a RHI and the reasons why.

5 Theme 2 - Quality and Effectiveness of Practice

Summary of Improvement Progress:

- ❖ Recruited 52 Social Workers
- ❖ Social Worker Student Unit established
- ❖ Established a Virtual Social Worker Academy
- ❖ 336 Staff have completed 2 day Signs of Safety training

- 5.1 The service have made significant progress in recruiting experienced staff to vacancies in Children's Services social work teams. On-going recruitment campaigns/jobs fairs has resulted in 52 social workers being appointed, 46 of these have started in post with a further 6 with planned start dates or recruitment checks being undertaken.
- 5.2 At the end of October 2016, the service have seven vacancies this represents 2% vacancy rate compared with 65 vacancies in December 2015 (22% vacancy rate). Reaching this position has enabled the authority to focus on improving its retention of experienced social workers building the practice expertise of our workforce as part of improving outcomes for children.
- 5.3 The Service has established a Social Work Student Unit, a virtual Social Work Academy and have plans in place for growing our own Social Workers through an 'Aspiring to Social Work' scheme. This will support the agency in recruiting the most able and committed social workers, alongside offering a route for experienced social care practitioners to step up and train as social workers and will be further bolstered by our membership of the West Midlands Teaching partnership.
- 5.4 The academy will ensure that the service are able to assure the progress of newly qualified social workers through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) curriculum, including preparing them for C&F SW accreditation and help build stronger links with experienced social workers continuous professional development arrangements, assessed career progression and the Practice Educator programme. Whilst retention of staff has improved a primary aim of the Academy will be to reduce the number of staff leaving following completion of the ASYE period.

- 5.5 The number children subject to a child protection plan has stabilised and is currently 518. This is a positive sign and gives a good platform to continue to decrease the numbers based on improved and less risk averse practice.
- 5.6 336 staff have completed training in Signs of Safety, the tool has been introduced and conferences are now facilitating a much more considered and strength based approach. This is helping to make child protection plans more realistic for families with the focus being on working with families together to manage risk. A recent workshop focussed on the need to develop child focused, impact and outcome focused plans.

6 Theme 3 - Quality Assurance and Audit

Summary of Improvement Progress:

- ❖ New Auditing for impact tool introduced
- ❖ Auditor training completed
- ❖ Action Plans for all audits completed

- 6.1 The recent Ofsted Monitoring visit has highlighted that the service overall strengths relate to systems and processes that relate to a strengthened culture of compliance. The areas for development relate to quality of practice and the impact the service are having on our children, this is an area of priority. This is being addressed with Senior Managers.
- 6.2 Audits continue to be 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.
- 6.3 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.

7 Theme 4 - Leadership and Governance

Summary of Improvement Progress:

- ❖ Strategic Leads appointed and commencing January 2017
- ❖ Principal Social Worker has commenced
- ❖ Children's Services vision launched
- ❖ Children's Services Transformation Board in place managing 8 projects
- ❖ Children's Services Strategy – Transformation projects
- ❖ Shadow Boards established for Transformation Board and Improvement Board
- ❖ Caseloads remain steady

- 7.1 Recruitment to a new senior leadership team has been completed with three new strategic leads starting in January 2017. The senior leadership team for Children's Services which includes the Principal Social Worker and Director of Children's Services will drive forward the next phase of improvement.
- 7.2 The appointment of the new Children's Principal Social Worker (PSW) in October 2016 has provided a renewed focus on improving the quality of practice. Future presentations to the improvement board will include the qualitative findings from audit.
- 7.3 Children's Services has developed a vision for the future that all service delivery will be based on. The results of this activity are being addressed through the Children's Services Transformation Programme. The Director of Children's Service presented at the Improvement Board on 14th November 2016 the Children's Service transformation. This

involves eight projects, the programme seeks not only to capture the whole journey of the child and to give voice to intentions for the future, it covers the workforce, what they will do and how they will be recruited, developed and supported into the future so that Coventry becomes the work destination of choice.

- 7.4 A Shadow Board has been established for frontline practitioners to engage and be more involved in future improvements and transformation issues. The first meeting of the Improvement Shadow Board took place on 8th November 2016 and the Transformation Shadow Board will be held in December 2016.
- 7.5 Caseloads remain steady across the service areas and have improved further in RAS. Reporting is in place to identify managerial oversight on cases.

8 Theme 5 - Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency

Summary of Improvement Progress:

- ❖ Children with three or more placements has reduced
- ❖ Timeliness of health assessments and dental checks ups have improved
- ❖ 34 children have been adopted and 18 placed for adoption
- ❖ An Adopters mentoring scheme has been implemented
- ❖ Increase in fostering enquires

- 8.1 In 2015/16 the percentage of children with three or more placements was 14% which was higher than most other West Midlands local authorities and above the all England average (10% in 2015). Although the percentage has dropped to 10% in October 2016, a placement stability action plan has been put in place to ensure that social workers, providers, placements team and commissioners work together effectively to support vulnerable placements.
- 8.2 The number of children in residential care is 82 or 14%. A key priority of the Placement Sufficiency Strategy is to reduce the percentage of children in residential care to 10%. This will be achieved by increasing the number of internal foster placements, market development work with Independent Fostering Agencies, and the delivery of a specialist fostering scheme with a third sector partner. This work has been embedded in the Transformation Programme into order to drive rapid improvements. 20% of Coventry's children are placed more than 20 miles from the city, a slight decrease since 2015/16.
- 8.3 The activity to re-commission external residential care and reconfigure the internal residential service will improve this position. Consultation is underway to modernise and refresh the internal residential care service through the establishment of four new homes based on modern care practice, alongside a new commissioning exercise that will create 30 new local placements and reduce reliance on external and distant provision.
- 8.4 The timeliness of health assessments and dental check-ups, and the completion of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires have improved (although further work on the latter is needed to integrate it more effectively into the health assessment process) as a result of robust monitoring and tracking. Care leaver health summaries are being routinely produced. Social Care Service Managers are held to account for performance through the dashboard process.
- 8.5 At the end of October 2016, 34 children have been adopted, with an expectation that there will be between 40-45 adoptions by the end of March 2017. During November 2016, jointly with Solihull, an adopters mentoring scheme has been implemented with 12 Coventry adopters. This will give adopters the opportunity to form a network of support.

- 8.6 A marketing and recruitment strategy has been developed to target adopter households who are able to meet the needs of older children and sibling groups. The target for the Fostering Service recruitment strategy is to have 100 more of Coventry's looked after children placed with internal foster carers by April 2018. This will alter the balance of the provision of foster care for Coventry's children and reduce the reliance on external fostering providers. As at April 2016 there were 145 looked after children placed with 147 fostering households. Not all fostering households have placements at all times.
- 8.7 Since April 2016, the number of enquiries about fostering has increased by over 21% compared to the same period last year and overall 220 fostering enquiries have been taken. These enquiries have resulted in 41 fostering assessments being initiated of which 26 are ongoing. Although some inactive fostering households have resigned from the service, this has been balanced by 15 new fostering households being approved this year to date, resulting in a net gain of 3 approved households, and there has been an overall growth of 21 children placed in internal fostering placements, giving a current total of 166.
- 8.8 The service is currently working with 372 young people (November 2016), of which 273 are care leavers aged over 18 and 93 are eligible young people. The service is in touch with 96.2% of care leavers which represents an improvement from the reported figure of 89.1% in December 2015.

9 Communication

- 9.1 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, hold open sessions for all staff and gets out and about visiting teams and talking to staff.

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Appendix 1

Children's Services Improvement Plan on a page 2016-17

Theme	What we want to achieve	Our priorities for 2016-17
1 Early Help & Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ An enhanced transformed Early Help Service ❖ Full Multi Agency Engagement in CAF ❖ MASH is embedded & information shared effectively ❖ Children and young people who go missing and are vulnerable to CSE are protected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Getting the Early Help Strategy working so we can step cases down safely ➤ Implementing the "Steps to Change" outcome impact tool ➤ Working with partners to review the Front Door and contacts into the MASH ➤ Increased intelligence of children who go missing vulnerable to CSE
2 Quality and Effectiveness of Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Improve timeliness and recording of Assessments ❖ Ensure children are safeguarded ❖ Recruit and retain an effective workforce ❖ Learning and Development impacting positively on practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduce the number of assessments that have an outcome of "no further action" ➤ Maintain a relentless focus on consistency and quality of practice ➤ Continue an active programme of recruitment for experienced social workers ➤ Promote and deliver an effective retention offer ➤ Develop a Social Work Academy
3 Quality Assurance and Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Learning from regular audits and demonstrating improved practice ❖ Learning from User Feedback ❖ Regular accurate Performance Information ❖ Strengthen care planning function of Independent Reviewing Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to improve the quality of practice through the audit and review cycle ➤ Launch Children's Services Health Check and repeat annually ➤ Consolidate and expand the use of performance data at strategic and operational levels
4 Leadership and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Accountability and oversight by Chief Executive and Council Leadership ❖ Effective Management Oversight of Cases ❖ Effective Supervision and reflective practice ❖ Manageable Caseloads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain the challenge function of the Children's Services Improvement Board ➤ Re-design Children's Service and deliver on transformation projects ➤ Implement a Children's Services Strategy for 2016-2018 ➤ Continue to monitor social work caseloads to ensure appropriate and manageable
5 Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Improved service outcomes for LAC and care leavers ❖ Health of LAC ❖ Increase the number of children adopted ❖ Increase recruitment of foster workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implementing the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Placement Sufficiency Strategy ➤ Working with commissioning colleagues and partners to ensure health assessments and dental checks are completed ➤ Continue to improve timeliness of adoption ➤ Continue with the Foster placements campaign