



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

9th February 2017

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 25 January 2017. The report is based on data from December 2016, unless stated otherwise. The next Improvement Board will be held on 8th March 2017.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) Consider the short term priorities and Action Plan to deliver future improvements in response to the Ofsted visit and DfE review
 - 2) 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 letter on the outcome of the monitoring visit was published on 8th December 2016.

- 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 in January 2017.
- 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 Future Improvement Short term priorities and Action Plan

- 4.1 The Children's Services Improvement Board on 25 January 2017 considered the short term priorities in response to the two-day Ofsted visit. The priorities for the period 1 January 2017-30 June 2017 and have been agreed by the Director of Children's Services, the Chair of the LSCB and the Chair of the Improvement Board.
- 4.2 The Action Plan for delivering the priorities is shown in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.3 The short term priorities to deliver future improvements are divided into three main priority areas; Quality of Practice, Workforce Development and Partnership highlighted below:
- 4.4 Quality of practice priorities

- **Commission and undertake an external review of how we manage risk across the service to ensure that children are being 'held' in the right part of the system.**
This priority will seek to assure that attention is focused on responding to children by assessing in timely ways and ensuring that the correct services are delivered and management oversight is secure and appropriate.
- **Increase capacity by 4 FTE in the CP and IRO service.**
This priority will ease some of the workload pressures on this part of the service. It will also help ensure that the key roles played by chairs and IROs in shaping the services received by children is of high quality. It will also strengthen the assurance function by enabling these two key groups of staff to be better equipped to inform the authority that work is to the required standard or to recommend course of action to effect improvements.
- **Deliver a practice development programme to strengthen assessment skills, analysis, parental capacity to change and planning.**
This priority is critical to the success of the service's drive to improve practice quality. Internal audits have shown clear and consistent evidence that assessment and planning are insufficiently consistent or developed to assure that a consistently good or better service is delivered to each child that needs it.

4.5 Workforce development priorities

- **Commission an intensive period of coaching and mentoring for first line managers, middle managers, CP Chairs and IROs.**
The previous Improvement Board short term priorities required extensive work to ensure that statutory timescales were met. The Ofsted visit and the DfE review confirmed the services own view that the service have largely achieved this objective and while not losing sight of the need to continue performing highly in the area it confirmed that the service need to refocus the attention to the quality aspects

of service delivery. The service are committed to improving the capacity of those social care professionals who are critical to this task and therefore have identified the groups who the service wish to prioritise for additional support and development.

- **Principal Social Worker to facilitate a series of master classes utilising leading academics.**

Continuous development of the workforce by exposure to contemporary learning opportunities is critical to the commitment to achieve a confident and professionally equipped workforce. Master classes will be a key strand of this intention.

4.6 Partnership working

- **Strengthen the Signs of Safety approach to Child Protection across the Children's Partnership**

This is a key element of engaging with partners in adopting effectively a tested model of working effectively with children and their families. Although the roll out has been started, its effectiveness and implementation has been affected by different professional groups having different levels of understanding and training. A refreshed approach to roll out across the partnership is commencing with the intention of full engagement being achieved during the next phase of training.

5 Ofsted conclusion and recommendations.

- 5.1 The recommendations strengthen the unrelenting focus upon quality. The service are sure that the answer to improving service quality lies in the task of securing better standards and greater consistency of front line practitioners and their managers, including IROs and CP Chairs.
- 5.2 The priorities reflect supporting and improving the front-line workforce which is at the heart of this improvement phase. Senior Leadership has been strengthened by the establishment of a full time and complete team.
- 5.3 Success in the priority areas for improvement will be harder to achieve but there is absolute commitment to do so. Children's Services have been able to progress the objectives supported by an injection of considerable resource which demonstrates the councils commitment and confidence.

6 Performance Overview

- 6.1 A performance overview of December performance is highlighted in **Appendix 3**.

7 Communication

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 holds open sessions for all staff and gets out and about visiting teams and talking to staff. This has included briefings with frontline staff recently.

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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

Appendix 2

Children's Services Response to the Ofsted Monitoring Visit November 2016

Action	Link to Ofsted Letter	Summary of Activity
<p>1. Commission an external review of how we manage risk across the service to ensure that children are being 'held' in the right part of the system</p>	<p>Thresholds in initial contact service are not consistently applied Identification and analysis of risk is not consistently to timely action including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate responses to risk • Consideration of ongoing risk • Avoidance of drift <p>Children in the right part of the system Interventions are not timely or focused Managerial oversight challenge to lack of progress on cases CP chairs offering challenge to a lack of progress</p>	<p>Rapid case file audit of case files across the service to assure senior leaders that risk analysis and management is robust</p>
<p>2. Commission an intensive period of Coaching and mentoring for First line managers, middle managers CP Chairs and IROs.</p>	<p>Audit framework is innovative but not yet having impact on practice or outcomes Thresholds in initial contact service are not consistently applied Identification and analysis of risk is not consistently resulting in timely action including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate responses to risk • Consideration of ongoing risk • Avoidance of drift <p>Managerial oversight challenge to lack of progress on cases (grip) CP chairs not offering challenge to a lack of progress Supervision not reflective or analytical and a lack of focus on case progression</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further rapid improvement to lift the quality of social work practice and demonstrate impact of this. • Strengthen further the IRO/CP Chairs service so that it provides appropriate challenge to ensure robust care planning for children in care, promoting legal and emotional security. • Front line practitioners and managers to understand what 'good' looks like and can articulate this in their work. Celebrating good practice. • A bespoke coaching and mentoring package to improve managers' day to day impact when managing teams and service areas • A cultural shift in the workforce from 'compliance' to 'professional judgment'

Action	Link to Ofsted Letter	Summary of Activity
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase confidence in the workforce and across the partnership • Leadership vision and values to be understood across the workforce • A culture of high challenge, high support and expectations • Managers to have a strong grip on performance and use data to inform practice • Good understanding and analysis of where best practice is and how the transferable elements are transferred • Clarity on how poor practice and non-compliance is being acted on and addressed • Themes from case file audits, IRO escalations, used to inform/change practice – and demonstrate evidence of impact.
3. Increase capacity by 4 FTE in the CP and IRO service	CP chairs offering challenge to a lack of progress	Additional 4 posts
4. Strengthen Signs of Safety approach to Child Protection across the Children's Partnership	<p>SoS is not used to consistently to measure risk and make decisions or to generate well-formed outcomes for children</p> <p>Identification and analysis of risk is not consistently to timely action including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate responses to risk • Consideration of ongoing risk • Avoidance of drift <p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART • Timescales 	<p>Appoint a Signs of Safety Implementation Manager working to the Principle Social Worker. (12 month fixed term contract)</p> <p>Commission additional signs of safety training for managers and CP Chairs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 day refresher training and reflection for all Conference Chairs (must have completed the 2 day training as minimum); 1 day as refresher; day 2 as reflection and action planning • Action planning for service on day 2 (trajectory developed) <p>Trajectory programme over 4-6 months to include (for example):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review of current conference process – strengths, worries

Action	Link to Ofsted Letter	Summary of Activity
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agree next steps - role of Conference Chair/social worker/family/child – preparation before conference, engagement during and following conference - safety planning: developing robust family owned safety plans - plan of individual learning requirements agreed/specific coaching/training requirements – - agree template for observations and feedback, appreciative inquiry - plan for observations of conferences – schedule planned and agreed (2 observations per CPC) – - collaborative audit with conference chairs (audit tool developed to review CP Conference process, minutes of meetings, family/partner agency feedback) - Review progress with CP Chairs – - Feedback from partners agencies, families on experience - Summary report on progress, areas for development - Meet with LSCB Chair; key partner agency senior leaders - briefings for partners – coaching of PLs/Conference chairs to deliver briefings (where is the LSCB in terms of prioritizing Signs of Safety?) - other critical areas the LA would wish to prioritise • Build in review after 3 months, 6 months

Action	Link to Ofsted Letter	Summary of Activity
<p>5. Deliver a practice development programme to strengthen Assessment skills, analysis, parental capacity to change and planning</p>	<p>Identification and analysis of risk is not consistently to timely action including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate responses to risk • Consideration of ongoing risk • Avoidance of drift <p>Analysis in assessments</p> <p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART • Timescales 	<p>Commission a Practice Development Programme from Research in Practice. To cover Analysis and critical thinking in assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidencing analytical thinking - Assessing and enabling parental capacity to change (focus on neglect) - Evidencing parental capacity to change, or lack thereof - Supervising and supporting these practices at manager and middle manager level
<p>6. Principal Social Worker to facilitate a series of master classes utilising leading academics</p>	<p>Assessments Planning and analysis of risk.</p>	<p>Master classes to cover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and analysis • Using chronologies and chronological thinking • Neglect and early identification • Domestic Violence • Smart and outcome focussed care planning

Proposed Implementation Schedule

	January	February	March	April	May	June
External review						
Intensive Coaching for Managers						
Additional CP Chairs and IRO capacity						
Signs of Safety approach						
Practice Development Programme						
Master Classes						

Appendix 3

Performance Overview – December 2016

'Green' indicates improvement, 'Amber' indicates a small change whilst 'Red' represents a decline against the previous month or YTD figure.

CAFs	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
Open CAFs	1722	1713
CAFs open to other agencies	482 (28.0%)	464 (27.0%)
% Action Plans completed NFA	175 (75.1%)	102 (80.3%)
% Referral to Social Care	31 (13.3%)	18 (14.2%)

The number and proportion of CAFs open to other agencies reduced from 1722 in November 2016 to 1713 in December 2016. CAF's open to other agencies has decreased from 482 (28%) to 464 (27%). % Action Plans completed NFA has increased from 75% to 80%, whilst % Referrals to social care increased from 13.3% to 14.2%.

CAF's open to other agencies remain below the target of 40%. Overall targets are being met for % Action plans completed NFA (70% Target) and % Referral to Social Care (<15% target.)

CAF's are being closed appropriately. Effective early help will prevent escalation into social care thus improving outcomes for children and young people earlier.

Contacts	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
Number of Contacts	1451	1271
Completed within timescales	66.0	61.8%

The number of contacts reduced from 1451 in November 2016 to 1271 in December 2016, with a decline in timeliness from 66% to 61.8%.

YTD timeliness of 63.7% remains below the 90% target which is measuring completion within one working day.

Contact timeliness continues to be an issue as MASH work on a seven day cycle rather than five days so contacts received on a Friday effectively become out of timescale. There are occasions when to complete a contact a call back for additional information is needed. This may incur delay as the professional who has made contact is unavailable in the timeframe. In addition a large police investigation in December has impacted on staff workloads.

MASH Assessments	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
Referral to Social Care	321 (78.7%)	287 (75.5%)
Diverted to eCAF	61 (15.0%)	57 (15.0%)

% of MASH Assessments resulting in a Referral to Social Care decreased slightly from 78.7% in November 2016 to 75.5% in December 2016. The % diverted to eCAF remained at 15%.

There is a small improvement this month in referrals to social care, with overall numbers remaining significantly less than last year (2400 in April – December 2016, compared with 3,545 in same period 2015). There has been a significant increase in % diverted to eCAF increasing from 6% in 2015/16 to 12% during April – December 2016.

The conversion rate of MASH assessments which proceed through to Social Care has reduced over the year with a comparative increase to Early Help suggesting that, along with the contacts being diverted at the Family front door there is a swift response to families in crisis and ensuring that families are receiving the right service at the right time by the most appropriate professional.

Domestic Violence (Contacts)	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
Number of Contacts	515	435
Completed within timescales	68.5%	69.4%

The number of DV Contacts reduced from 515 in November 2016 to 435 in December 2016. Timeliness improved slightly from 68.5% to 69.4%.

Although this is a slight improvement, YTD timeliness of 73.6% remains below the 90% target.

There is an improved response in supporting families.

Referrals & Re-Referrals	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
Referrals	418	472
Re-Referrals	20.8%	16.3%

The number of Referrals has increased from 418 in November 2016 to 472 in December 2016. Re-Referrals reduced from 20.8% to 16.3%.

The number of referrals has continued to rise since September, although this is considerably lower than 642 in December 2015. There is positive improvement in the re-referral rate of 16.3% being the lowest percentage in the last 12 months. However YTD 25.4% remains above the target of 15%.

The reduction in re-referrals indicates that the new process at the front door with clear managerial oversight is working and that referrals are being closed appropriately.

Children Seen	2015/16	2016/17(YTD)
% seen within 5 working days of Contacts resulting in a Referral	33.8%	52.1%
% seen as part of Children & Families Assessment	96.3%	98.5%

The % of children seen within 5 working days has increased from 33.8% in 2015/16 to 52.1% in April to December 2016. The % children seen as part of the C&F Assessment has increased to 98.5%

The % of children seen within 5 working days has continued to improve, however is well below the target of 90%. The % children seen as part of the C&F Assessment is meeting the target of 98%.

The increase in timeliness will improve the safety of children.

Section 47s	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
S47s	170	130
Section 47 timeliness	92.4%	90.8%

The number of Section 47s completed reduced from 170 in November 2016 to 130 in December 2016. The % being completed within 15 working days of the initial enquiry has reduced slightly from 92.4% to 90.8%.

Section 47 timeliness continues to meet the 90% target.

Safeguarding concerns are responded to in a timely manner.

ICPCs	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
Children subject to ICPC	60	30
ICPC timeliness	72.9%	100%

ICPC Timeliness has increased from 72.9% to 100%. The number of children subject to ICPC reduced from 60 in November 2016 to 30 in December 2016.

This has improved YTD to 84.8%, however this is still below the 98% target.

This indicates that more children are being kept safe.

Child Protection	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
Child Protection Plans	510	511
% repeat plans	13.3%	16.7%

The number of children subject to child protection plans remain at a similar level to last month, whilst the % repeat plans increased from 13.3% in November 2016 to 16.7% in December 2016.

The number of CP Plans remain lower than the year high figure of 559 in September 2016. The 17.8% Repeat plans YTD remains above the target of <12%.

Children are receiving appropriate care and support at an earlier stage in their lives.

Looked After Children	2015/16	2016/17 (YTD)
% new LAC previously in care	23.9%	15.2%
% children seen within 1 week of entering care	81.0%	89.9%
% children 3 or more placements	14.1%	9.3%

Short term placement stability has reduced from 14.1% in 2015/16 to 9.3% during April-December 2016, which is positive. % children of children entering care remains at 15.2% which is close to the target of 15%. % of children seen within 1 week of entering care has improved from 81% in 2015/16 to 89.9% during April – December 2016.

There is a positive improvement in the direction of travel across all three measures.

This means that children are being seen promptly when entering care and less children are experiencing turbulence and disruptions in their placements.

Care Leavers	2015/16	2016/17 (YTD)
% care leavers in suitable accommodation	82.2%	93.1%
% in Employment, Education or Training	44.3%	55.9%

% care leavers in suitable accommodation has improved from 82.2% in 2015/16 to 93.1% during April – December 2016. The % of the same cohort in employment, education or training has increased from 44.3% in 2015/16 to 55.9% during April – December 2016.

There is positive improvement in % care leavers in suitable accommodation which is above the target of 90% and the % in employment, education or training remains below the target of 60%.

More young people are accommodated safely and the vast majority of young people in unsuitable accommodation are in custody. More young people are engaged in education and employment.

Missing Children	Nov 2016	Dec 2016
% RHIs completed	57.5%	42.9%
% of completed RHIs within timescale	72.0%	93.9%

The % Return to home interviews (RHI) completed reduced from 57.5% in November 2016 to 42.9% in December 2016. The YTD figure has reduced from 55.1% in 2015/16 to 49.4% during April – December 2016. The % completed within timescale increased from 72% to 93.9%.

There has been a reduction in the % RHI's completed since 2015/16 and continues to be below the 70% target. There is positive improvement in the direction of travel for timeliness, which is above the target of 70% and significantly higher than 45.4% in 2015/16.

There is a quicker response to children who go missing.

Caseloads

The number of open cases at month-end increased from 3,031 in November 2016 to 3,156 in December 2016. The largest increase was in RAS.

There has been a general reduction in the number of open cases during the year, however the increase in December 2016 means that we are still above the target of 3000. All teams apart from RAS are meeting their target of 20-22 cases in December 2016.

Social workers caseloads are becoming more manageable.