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

19 July 2018

Subject: Progress on Children's Services Improvement Plan

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 4 July 2018. The next Improvement Board will be held on 3 October 2018.

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
 - 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. As a result, the Department for Education issued an Improvement Notice on 30th June 2014. 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. Ofsted re-inspected Children's Services on 6th -30th March 2017, the outcome of the inspection was published on 13th June 2017, Children's Services were judged as "requires improvement to be good". Services for Children are no longer inadequate.
- 3.2 The Department for Education (DfE) removed Children's Services from intervention on 13 June 2017, the service is no longer subject to an improvement notice. Supervision and support has been provided by the DfE over the last 12 months, which included two reviews held in January 2018 and June 2018. This has now ended.
- 3.3 To oversee the improvement journey and as a response to the inadequate rating a Children's Service Improvement Board was established. 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 twelve weeks.
- 3.4 The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have both given public commitment that Children's Services remains a key priority for the Council. This

includes prioritising funding for Children's Services to maintain its capacity to improve. 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.

- 3.5 Ofsted's revised new framework includes focused visits to local authorities who are judged to be 'requires improvement' the first visit was held on 30-31 January 2018. Two Inspectors spent two days reviewing the MASH, the front door service and speaking to social workers and partners. Visits were also made to two area social teams to review children in need cases. The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 22 February 2018.

4 Department for Education Review

- 4.1 The Department for Education conduct 6 month reviews for all 'support and supervision' LA's that have exited intervention. The first 6-month review was held on 23 January 2018, followed by the exit 6-month review held on 15 June 2018. The focus of the exit visit included:
- Management oversight, with a particular focus on assessments
 - Social work Practice, with a focus on caseloads and plans
 - Progress update on Ofsted's nine recommendations
 - Transition to the regional improvement plan
- 4.2 The exit review provided an opportunity for Coventry to identify the progress since the last review in January 2018 and discuss current priorities for the next year. The DfE intervention team confirmed that they were satisfied with progress and agreed transition to the regional improvement team. The DfE Improvement Lead is now a member of the Improvement Board. The letter from the DfE confirming this was circulated to Board members.

5 Ofsted Annual Conversation

- 5.1 The annual engagement with regional representatives was held in April 2018 to review the self-evaluation and reflect on progress and future engagement.
- 5.2 A briefing was provided on the quality of social work practice; SCR briefing and serious incident notifications; Child Sexual Exploitation activity; update on Children's Centre Offer; relationships between health and education re: two year olds development; Regional Adoption Agency.

6 Workforce

- 6.1 The Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2018 has been refreshed to reflect the workforce needs of Children's Services. It builds on the progress the service has made over the last three years and supports the aim of achieving the right capacity, capability and culture needed to confidently face organisational challenges.
- 6.2 A key element in delivering high quality services is improving the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention 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 and help make Coventry a great place to work and live.
- 6.3 Recruiting and retaining experienced social workers is a challenge across children and families social work, and in particularly in area based teams. This is a both a regional issue across the West Midlands and Nationally.

- 6.4 The Council have been successful in achieving £1,790,610 through a bid with the West Midlands Regional Teaching Partnership. The two-year contract will ensure minimum numbers of practice educators, academics returning to practice and practitioners enhancing academic delivery. A modular framework allows for bespoke responses to individual learning needs and aspirations with the programme built around a two-year delivery period to allow for impact and culture change. This will promote a step change across the West Midlands and will reflect a commitment and ambition for closer collaboration, and working together to improve the quality of social work education. This funding has been awarded to Coventry City Council on behalf of the 14 local authorities and 8 higher education establishments in the region. This is a reflection on how our standing on the regional and national platform has shifted.

7 Overview Summary

- 7.1 The last three months' highlights how important this phase of the improvement journey is, the Improvement plan progress and highlight reports demonstrates the progress and changes moving forward.
- 7.2 The Children's senior leadership team and extended Leadership are embedding and working together driving forward practice improvements and service changes. The next phase of improvement relies heavily on corporate support and the support from partners to ensure that improvement continues. There is an explicit intention to ensure that Children's Services reaches a position where it is continuously achieving good outcomes for the Children of Coventry. The Children's Services Strategic Plan will support our journey in "Getting to Good" whilst it is acknowledged that this will take considerable time to achieve.

8 Communications

- 8.1 The e-newsletter continues to be produced focusing on Children's Services. 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 'getting to good.' 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.

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