



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

28 November 2019

Subject: Children's Services Improvement

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the progress with Children's Services improvement reported to the Continuous Improvement Executive Group on 22 October 2019. The next Continuous Improvement Executive Group will be held on 19 December 2019.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) To note the current progress
 - 2) Identify any areas the Board may want to look at in more detail
 - 3) Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 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 have been provided by the DfE up to June 2018. This has now ended.
- 3.3 A report on the future arrangements for continuing and sustaining improvements in Coventry was presented by the Independent Chair and the Director of Children's Services at Improvement Board on 3 October 2018. It was agreed that the Children's Services Improvement Board is replaced by a Continuous Improvement Executive Group to retain political and corporate oversight of Children's Services Continuous Improvement.
- 3.4 The Continuous Improvement Executive Group will ensure tighter focus on continuous improvement and Ofsted preparation. The impact of performance will be managed and monitored by the group. This is an interim measure before returning to business as usual in accordance with the revised arrangements for Children's Safeguarding, and subject to satisfactory inspection by September 2020. At this time the Executive Group would cease and oversight transferred to Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership and monitored as business as usual. Board members fully supported the revised arrangements and membership of the group.
- 3.5 The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive continue to give 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.

- 3.6 Ofsted's revised framework includes focused visits to local authorities who are judged to be 'requires improvement' the first visit was held on 30-31 January 2018. The visit focused on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 22 February 2018.
- 3.7 The Ofsted Annual Conversation with regional representatives is undertaken each year, this took place on 14th February 2019. The meeting is part of a broader meeting covering education and early years.
- 3.8 A further focused visit was held on 26-27 February 2019. The visit focused on permanency planning and achieving permanency. The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 21st March 2019. The next standard Inspection of Children's Services is likely to be between September 2019 and September 2020.

4 Children's Services Continuous Improvement Progress

- 4.1 The Continuous Improvement Executive Group will continue to provide oversight at pace for development that needs to improve over the next twelve months.

5 Children's Services Strategic Plan Journey to Excellence 2019-2022

- 5.1 The updated Children's Services Strategic Plan Journey to Excellence 2019-2022, was finalised and approved at the Continuous Improvement Executive Group on 22 October 2019. The plan includes the transformation and improvement priorities, a revised vision and the Children's Services improvement journey demonstrating achievement from 2013 to 2019.
- 5.2 The Continuous Improvement plan has been embedded into the plan. The plan outlines the improvement actions the service will be taking over the next 12 months, progress against these actions will be reported to future Executive Group meetings.
- 5.3 The Strategic Plan was published on 7th November 2019 the link to the council website page is below:

Website link is: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/childrenservicesstrategicplan>

6 Performance Board

- 6.1 A Children's Services Performance Board has been established to focus on core performance data and understand areas of performance that require improvement.
- 6.2 The Children Services Performance Board will oversee performance monitoring progress and be responsible for;
 - To ensure performing reporting parameters are correct and understood by all relevant teams (both in terms of performance measurement, timeliness & schedule of dates for performance reporting).
 - Undertaking detailed scrutiny of performance reports to ensure they are meeting expected improvement trends,
 - Undertake detailed scrutiny of issues relating to statutory reports including data quality and outliers;
 - Monitoring the progress of improvement plans, where poor performance has been identified, and report back to senior officers on progress
 - More broadly review performance reporting arrangements across the directorate, ensuring they are meeting the needs of services and teams that require performance information.
 - To consider any themes which may be arising so areas of concern can be addressed or prevented in a timely manner.

- 6.3 The first meeting was held on 28th October 2019. Meetings will be undertaken on a monthly basis. Progress will be reported to the Children's Services Continuous Improvement Executive Group.
- 6.4 Executive Group members were reassured that performance glitches have been unblocked and critical performance indicators are highlighting improvement in the right direction. The Performance board will focus closely on core performance indicators and report progress to the Executive group.

7 Quality Assurance Framework

- 7.1 The quality assurance and continuous improvement framework articulates how Coventry City Council Children's Services manages and measures quality. Improving the consistency in the quality of work improves outcomes for Coventry's children. This supports the development of a culture that expects and values high standards that improve the quality of service to users and carers. These aspirations and standards drive up expectations, improve learning and strengthen outcomes and impact.
- 7.2 Children's Services have introduced monthly QA visits. The first visit took place in October. The senior leadership team and lead member visited 5 social work teams to talk to social workers, review case files, undertake dip sampling and observe practice. Visits will be held once a month to review and improve practice.
- 7.3 The QAF schedule was shared with Executive group members to highlight audit activity taking place monthly. The audit schedule includes case file audits/themed audits/observations/dip sampling across all the service areas. Work in Commissioning and Service Performance Reviews and work in YOS were also identified.

8 Social Work Academy

- 8.1 The Social Work Academy has successfully recruited and supported 29 Children and Families Social Workers to complete their first 6 months in employment. During the time in the academy Newly Qualified Social Workers have undertaken a range of learning and professional development programmes. This includes developing and enhancing their core skills and knowledge, and resilience.
- 8.2 A total of 48 have commenced the Academy, with a further 8 commencing in November, this brings the total to 56 who have commenced since July 2018.
- 8.3 The Social Work Academy has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Guardian Public Service awards under the category of workforce development. This is following recognition for the work that has been undertaken to support the newly qualified social workers in the early years of their professional development and transition from university to become practice ready. The award also recognises the work on the progression scheme and recruitment and retention.

9 Workforce

- 9.1 The review of business services has been concluded and staff transferring from business services have formed a newly created service area and have fully integrated within Children's Services from 1st October 2019. The new service will be known as 'The Professional Support Service', the experience and professionalism the service will bring is key to our continued improvement journey.
- 9.2 The Social Worker of the Year Awards recognise and celebrate the achievements of social workers, promote social work and incentivise individuals and teams in the social work profession to achieve excellence. The Through Care Service have been nominated for their innovative work including the TV documentary superkids and the development of the local

offer. The awards will be held in London in November where the winners will be announced.

10 Partnership Working

- 10.1 The recent SEND inspection had been a good opportunity to work across the partnership in the same way the service will approach the forthcoming Inspection of Children's Services.
- 10.2 A Scrutiny Board 2 Task and Finish Group has been established to review partnership engagement and working in Children's Services. The group will review 'How are partner agencies contributing to multi agency work to effectively protect children'
- 10.3 A visit has been arranged for members of Scrutiny Board 2 (Education and Children's Services) to visit Children's Services at Broadgate House. The purpose of the visit is to provide members with an understanding of the services provided by Children's Services. This will be held on 27th November 2019.

Authors: Sonia Watson, Children's Services Programme Manager
John Gregg, Director of Children's Services

Contact details: john.gregg@coventry.gov.uk Tel: (024) 7683 3402
sonia.watson@coventry.gov.uk Tel: (024) 7683 1890