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

9 January 2020

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 19 December 2019. The next Continuous Improvement Executive Group will be held on 25 February 2020.

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".
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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 anticipated to be between September 2019 and September 2020.

4 Children's Services Continuous Improvement Progress

- 4.1 The Continuous Improvement plan was reviewed by Executive Group board members on 19 December 2019, overall good progress is being made against actions in the plan.

5 Performance Board

- 5.1 A Children's Services Performance Board was established in October 2019, two meetings have been held to date to review and scrutinise critical performance indicators.
- 5.2 The Performance board have reviewed the following critical performance indicators:
- % Re-referrals (referrals started within 12 months of a previous referral start date)
 - Section 47 which do not go to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)
 - % repeat Child Protection Plans
 - % of new episodes of Care where the child was previously looked after in the last 12 months.
 - % LAC Initial Care Plans recorded within 10 working days YTD 38.1%
 - % first LAC Review held within timescale
 - % LAC Long Term Stability
- 5.3 Ongoing dip sampling is being undertaken to review and understand the issues of concern, reports identifying findings will be addressed through the next Performance board.
- 5.4 Executive Group members were reassured that work is being undertaken to address performance issues and critical performance indicators are highlighting improvement in the right direction. The Performance board will continue to focus closely on core performance indicators and report progress to the Executive group.

6 Workforce

- 6.1 The Social Work Academy were successfully awarded the Guardian Public Sector Awards for Innovation in Workforce Development and Recruitment in November 2019. The award recognises the success of the Social Work Academy in offering a supportive environment, where Newley Qualified Social Workers can develop their practice with reduced caseloads; building upon their skills, and knowledge and values gained in their qualifying courses; bridging the gap between Student Social Worker and Newley Qualified Social Workers, by modelling, coaching and teaching best practice; supporting Newley Qualified Social Workers to enter their teams outside of the Social Work Academy, confidentially and competently, whilst recognising that at this stage they are still Newley Qualified Social Workers, in their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment. This is a significant achievement for the service.
- 6.2 Children's Services held a Learning and Development Networking event on 14 November 2019. The event focused on learning and development and included a talk on motivational interviewing by Luke Tibbetts from the University of Warwick. The event was a good

opportunity to network and showcase what Coventry has to offer working as a Social Worker in Coventry.

6.3 The Local Authority Children's Social Work Workforce Data Collection year ending 30th September 2019 was submitted at the end of November 2019 for the period 1st October 2018 to 30th September 2019.

6.4 Summary of data for the last four years (2016 to 2019) is highlighted below:

- The number of social workers has increased each year to 328 (310 FTE) as at September 2019; over the 4-year period, there have been more new starters than leavers each year. Social workers have also increased in the West Midlands to 3,429 (3,199 FTE) and England national figures also show a rise in social workers to 31,720 (29,470 FTE) as at September 2018
- The number of agency workers has decreased from 57 to 38 workers as at 30 September 2019; As a result, the Agency Worker rate has decreased to 10.8, which is below the England (15.4) and West Midlands (16.3) agency worker rates for 2018
- The Vacancies FTE has decreased to 32 in September 2019 from 72 in September 2018; the vacancy rate of 9.3 in September 2019 has decreased from 20.4 in 2018 and which is well below the England and the West Midlands rates for 2018 (16.5 and 18.4)
- The Turnover rate has decreased to 11.1 in September 2019 from 18.3 in September 2018; and is lower than both the England and West Midland averages (15.2 and 15.9) for 2018
- Sickness Absence in days has increased this year after a fall the previous year.
- The Average Caseload has reduced to 13.4 cases per worker reported as holding at least 1 case as at 30th September 2019 compared with 15.1 in 2018. This remains lower than the England and West Midlands rates (17.4 and 17.9 in 2018)
- In 2018-19 4 Frontline programme students successfully qualified, registering with the HCPC in October 2019 having commenced in the Social Work Academy. For 2019-20, 5 Frontline programme students commenced on the programme to qualify in September 2020

7 Children's Services Conference

7.1 The first Children's Services Conference was held on 6th November and spilt over two half day session, with half the staff attending the morning session and the other attending the afternoon session. The conference was an opportunity for all Children's Services staff to come together: The half day sessions included news and updates; time for reflection; reporting on a Serious Case Review; launch of the Strategic plan and updated vision; Ofsted planning expectations and a time to celebrate successes.

7.2 The feedback from staff has been very positive. Staff stated that there was a good balance of sharing information and celebrating success. It provided an opportunity for all staff to meet the senior leadership team. There was an interactive opportunity for the audience through the use of Slido. The information has been collated and questions asked in the Serious Case Review and Ofsted preparation session will be developed into an FAQ document and disseminated to staff in preparation for the next Ofsted inspection. The conference will be held twice a year in April and December next year.

8 Child Exploitation - A partnership approach to responding to young people engaged in violent crime and gang activity

- 8.1 A joint presentation by Coventry City Council and West Midlands Police was presented to the Executive Group on 19 December 2019 to provide assurance to senior leaders and members of how child exploitation issues are being addressed; to provide local and national context; to provide assurance that partners are working together and to provide information about Children's Services partnership response.

9 Ofsted Preparation

- 9.1 In preparation for Children's Services next Ofsted inspection, work is progressing with the update of the next Self-Assessment, which was last completed in January 2019. The updated self-assessment will be completed by mid-January 2020. A presentation to Political Cabinet will be held on 21 January 2020 to provide an update to members on Ofsted readiness and our journey to 'good'.

10 Overall Summary

- 10.1 It remains a challenging operating environment and the service continues to work hard to maximise the opportunities for innovation and creativity.
- 10.2 In the lead up to the next Inspection, the Children's senior leadership team and extended Leadership Team will continue to work together to drive forward practice improvements and service changes. This phase of improvement relies heavily on corporate support and the support from partners to ensure that improvement continues. There is explicit intention to ensure that Children's Services reaches a position where it is continuously achieving good outcomes for the Children of Coventry.

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