

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

13 MARCH 2017

UPDATE ON THE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Summary

1. This report is intended to provide the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel (C&F OSP) with an update on the Children's Social Care Service Improvement Plan.

Background

2. When the C&F OSP last met (on 27 January), it was just 3 days after Ofsted had published their report entitled 'Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board'.
3. The overall judgement for Worcestershire was 'inadequate'. This was a very disappointing judgement for Worcestershire's children and young people, as well as for the committed and hardworking staff within the service.
4. During the C&F OSP debate on 27 January, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Children and Families, the Director of Children, Families and Communities (DCS) and the Assistant Director: Safeguarding Services outlined that plans were already in place to deliver service improvement prior to the inspection and this work has continued and been further strengthened to form an improvement plan to cover all recommendations from Ofsted.
5. The CMR, DCS and Assistant Director: Safeguarding Services offered members of the C&F OSP the opportunity to attend an extraordinary meeting to receive a briefing on the Service Improvement Plan (SIP).
6. This extraordinary meeting took place on Tuesday 14 February 2017 and was well attended by C&F OSP members. The session was led by the Assistant Director: Safeguarding Services who provided all elected members in attendance with an overview of the 8 work-streams within the Service Improvement Plan.

Key updates since last report to the Panel

7. Since the last update to C&F OSP, there have been a number of notable meetings/events which have taken place that relate directly to the SIP.
8. On Friday 17 February 2017, a small delegation from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) including the Chief Executive and DCS visited Nottinghamshire

County Council to discuss their development from an inadequate judgement in 2009 to Ofsted judging them to be good in 2015.

9. This proved to be helpful sharing of learning, and we brought away lots of information as well as food for thought which we are making use of to ensure our plan is as comprehensive as it needs to be to improve our practice. A key message was that it takes a time to generate long term sustainable improvement, but holding your nerve and sticking with the programme is really important.

10. Other headline messages included ensuring that children remain central to the improvement. Useful information, advice and guidance was also provided around practice improvements, use of ICT, legal support, communications approaches and making effective use of data. Peer learning will continue to be a feature of our Improvement Plan, as we develop networks with other Local Authorities and recognise and mirror best practice where appropriate. Peer learning visits to both Leeds City Council and Devon County Council are planned during March 2017.

11. On Monday 27 February, Ofsted hosted an 'Action Planning Day' at County Hall. This was led by Jenny Turnross, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and Chris Sands, Senior HMI from Ofsted and was attended by senior officers across WCC and a number of partners including some of our headteachers.

12. The agenda for the day covered themes from the inspection and some guidance on key issues for us to consider in our future work – these included neglect, assessment, care leavers, thresholds and leadership. During the day, Ofsted reinforced key messages from the inspection about thresholds not being understood by everyone, about the workforce challenge of recruiting and retaining staff and the impact of policies and procedures on practice.

13. It was a very informative day and a number of key learning points will be incorporated into the SIP. The importance of engaging our partners early in order to deliver successful improvement is a consistent message from both Nottinghamshire County Council visit and the Ofsted Action Planning day.

Governance of the Service Improvement Plan (SIP)

14. WCC have had a Safeguarding Improvement Board running for the last 18 months. However, it has now taken the opportunity to refresh its remit and membership to oversee the SIP.

15. The Children's Social Care Service Improvement Board met for the first time in its new form on Tuesday 28 February 2017, and following the invite extended by the CMR at the last Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny meeting, the revised membership now includes cross-political party representation, with elected members Pattie Hill (Labour), Fran Oborski (2013 Group) and John Thomas (Independent) joining the Board, along with Senior HMI Ofsted Inspector, Chris Sands.

16. A productive first meeting of the Board established a terms of reference. There was also positive discussion about the work programme, progress made and focus for the next phase.

17. Appendix 1 is the 'live' master version of the SIP, following approval from the Service Improvement Board. This plan has been finalised following a number of draft iterations, to agree priorities and rationalise activities etc. Clearly, the SIP will continue to evolve over the coming months, but this version represents a fixed baseline to work from and one which we can communicate with consistency to our wider stakeholders.

18. The SIP document (Appendix 1) consists of two pages, the first being the SIP, outlining the 8 improved outcomes we're seeking to achieve along with the eight work-streams and associated projects we believe will deliver them and address our 14 Ofsted Recommendations.

19. The second page illustrates the link the SIP has with other key strategic documents, e.g. WCC's Corporate Plan, the Strategic Economic Plan and the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) Business Plan. It shows the linkages between the objectives of each of the individual strategies and how they contribute towards the SIP, emphasising that the SIP has not been developed in isolation.

20. This document will need to be updated shortly to reflect the outputs from WSCB's Development Day, held on Thursday 2 March 2017, which was held to shape its Business Plan for 2017/18.

21. During this event, the DCS talked to partners about the inspection and the SIP and asked for support across the whole system to make sure our services to protect children from harm are as good as they possibly can be. Partners from the WSCB were invited to act as a 'critical friend' in one of the eight work-streams and immediately four colleagues volunteered. It is intended that a further four will volunteer by the formal WSCB meeting on Wednesday 15 March 2017.

22. The critical friend role will involve discussion with the work-stream leads to talk through the approach and make sure that a wider partnership perspective and contribution can be brought into the work in order to make sure there is maximum impact for children.

23. The Business Plan for the WSCB next year will focus on support and challenge for the SIP, will have a specific priority around the lived experience of the child and will consider the impact that child sexual exploitation, neglect and domestic abuse has on this experience. Ultimately, we will have a plan that focuses on what works and what matters to children and young people.

24. The Service Improvement Board will provide formal updates to WSCB on a quarterly basis. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the programme and corporate governance arrangements which will provide delivery assurance and policy approval/development respectively for the SIP.

Delivery of the SIP

25. Programme and project management support has now been identified and mobilised to support delivery of the SIP. The Senior and Wider Leadership Teams have also held workshops to establish cross-Council support, deploying dedicated

specialist resources from across the organisation to support development and delivery of various aspects of the SIP.

26. A project room within County Hall has also been established for the SIP, providing a dedicated working space for the virtual team which has been deployed to work on the SIP and improve opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

27. Key lines of accountability and ownership have been established across the entire SIP, and coupled with the additional capacity and capability now deployed there are a number of successes and achievements that have already been delivered at this relatively early stage:

- **Work-stream 1 - Support and Develop Our Workforce**
 - *Social Work Workforce Strategy has been developed, finalised and approved*
 - *Market engagement activity has been completed and evaluated for Social Work Academy project*
- **Work-stream 2 – Improve Our Practice**
 - *Children in Need (CIN) Framework guidance completed and uploaded to Back to Basics website*
 - *Revised Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) policies and procedures completed and signed off, along with updates to Framework-i workflow*
- **Work-stream 3 – Commitment to Continuous Improvement**
 - *Quality Assurance Framework developed, approved and now live*
 - *Auditing programme underway and this will now inform Ofsted monthly case-tracking requirement*
 - *A number of performance management information dashboards have been deployed i.e. Family Front Door / Children In Need*
- **Work-stream 4 – Listen to the Voice of the Child**
 - *Four service user feedback forms developed to improve understanding of performance*
- **Work-stream 5 – Make the Right Decisions at the Right Time**
 - *Detailed plan scoped out for CSE and multi-agency meetings are now taking place on a weekly basis to progress*
 - *Referral outcome letter and outcome of assessment letters implemented at Family Front Door*
 - *Partnership locality events scheduled in all six districts April to June*
- **Work-stream 6 – Deliver Good Outcomes for Children**
 - *ePEP (Electronic Personal Education Plan) training for all stakeholders has now been completed ahead of system launch on 17 March 2017*
 - *All adoption policies and procedures have now been completed (21 in total)*
 - *A working group has been established to revise the Corporate Parenting Board strategy and pledge*
- **Work-stream 7 – Focus on Permanency for our Children**
 - *Completed review and development of the processes for managing legal pre-proceedings and proceedings to ensure consistency of understanding*
 - *Case Tracker system is now operational and access rolled out to Group Managers and Team Managers in Locality Social Work teams*
- **Work-stream 8 – Provide Earlier Access to Support for Children and Families**

- *The Community Social Worker role has now been revised and approved to provide greater clarity to all stakeholders*
- *A positive role model pilot has commenced in Bromsgrove with the Fire Service*

28. Appendix 3 provides a summary overview of the SIP, with each project Red, Amber or Green (RAG) assessed in terms of its progress. This document provides 'at a glance' performance information across the entire SIP, and represents a key management tool for the Service Improvement Board to monitor progress of the SIP.

29. The key focus for the Service Improvement Board is any projects with a Red assessment, to understand the issues behind this and how they can support a resolution.

Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People

30. In addition to the SIP Summary Sheet, it is crucial that Children, Families and Communities are able to demonstrate the SIP is having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people in Worcestershire.

31. The SIP will be supported by a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dashboard that will monitor the performance of services delivered to children and young people in Worcestershire. The KPI dashboard is currently in development and it is intended that the dashboard, accompanied with an analysis of the data (provided by the CFC Leadership Team), will streamline reporting and provide consistency to key stakeholder groups and partners, including the CF O/S Panel.

32. Appendix 4 outlines the eight SIP outcomes and cross-references them with the Ofsted recommendation they will address and the proposed KPIs that will be used to measure performance. The intention is to keep the number of KPIs to a manageable and meaningful number, and provides the CF O/S Panel with an opportunity to engage at this early stage of development.

Next Steps

33. At the last C&F OSP meeting, reference was made to Paragraph 105 of the Ofsted report. This referred to a wide-scale review of Children In Need (CIN) cases that had taken place in June 2016, which now appeared to be fundamentally flawed.

34. Work is now underway to re-review these CIN cases with over 100 being completed during February. The DCS and Assistant Director: Safeguarding Services have stipulated that this review will continue throughout March 2017.

35. The Local Authority has 70 days from the date that Ofsted publishes its report (24 January 2017) to submit its improvement plan which gives a deadline of 3 May 2017.

36. Once the improvement plan has been submitted, Ofsted monitoring visits can be agreed, and these will take place at a frequency of every 3 months. Each visit will have a key theme, to be agreed in advance with the Local Authority.

37. Ofsted monitoring visits will take place over two days with the first day focused on case tracking (6 cases as identified by WCC). Day two has a slightly wider focus with dip sampling of cases being undertaken in the chosen focus area(s) and will also involve asking staff about progress being made. Each visit is followed by a letter which outlines the outcome of the visit (there are no judgements made but instead a statement summarising direction of travel). The first letter is not published.

38. Typically, four monitoring visits are scheduled over 12 months, and during this process Ofsted will be in dialogue with the Local Authority about the best time to re-inspect. The only caveat to this is if Ofsted feel children and young people are at risk of significant harm due to evidence of a lack of progress and / or poor practice. The re-inspection will be a full Single Inspection Framework (SIF), as was experienced in October / November 2016.

39. Jenny Turnross, HMI from Ofsted, who led the inspection in October/November 2016 will lead on the monitoring visits too. The DCS in particular is pleased with this appointment as it ensures continuity from Ofsted, and should make it easier to track our improvement, whilst also building on the relationships developed during the inspection last year.

40. Finally, the Local Authority is awaiting communication from the Department for Education (DfE), about the appointment of a person to assess the Local Authority's capacity and capability to deliver the improvements required to Children's Services. This communication is expected in early March 2017.

Purpose of the Meeting

The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider the information in the report
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Service Improvement Plan – Live v1.0
Appendix 2 – Service Improvement Plan governance diagram
Appendix 3 – Service Improvement Plan (RAG) Summary Sheet – Feb 2017
Appendix 4 – Service Improvement Plan – Outcomes, KPIs and Ofsted Recommendations

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) the following background papers relate to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda Minutes of the Cabinet held on 2 February 2017
- Agenda and Minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 27 January 2017

All council agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website [here](#)