

**CABINET**  
**6 APRIL 2017****CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE – SERVICE IMPROVEMENT  
PLAN UPDATE**

---

**Relevant Cabinet Member**  
Mr M Bayliss

**Relevant Officer**  
Director of Children, Families and Communities

**Recommendation**

**1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families recommends that the Cabinet:**

- (a) notes the progress made in developing the Children's Social Care Service Improvement Plan (SIP) and the governance arrangements to manage delivery and monitor performance;**
- (b) reviews and approves the Service Improvement Plan (attached as Appendix 1) and delegates authority to the Director of Children, Families and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families to update the Service Improvement Plan as appropriate;**
- (c) reviews and approves the revised Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy (attached as Appendix 5) for Looked After Children and Care Leavers which will ensure that we better understand, plan and meet future accommodation demand for Looked after Children and Care Leavers within Worcestershire;**
- (d) reviews and approves the revised Corporate Parenting strategy (attached as Appendix 6) which sets out the Council's approach to delivering effective corporate parenting responsibilities across the whole Council and partner agencies to our Looked after Children and Care Leavers population; and**
- (e) reviews and approves the revised Care Leavers strategy (attached as Appendix 7) which sets out the key responsibilities for the Council and our partners to ensure that our Care Leavers receive the support, help and guidance they may need to be able to support themselves, as they transition into adulthood to live independently.**

## **Background**

2. On 24 January 2017, Ofsted 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' for Worcestershire County Council.

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. Following publication of the report, 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 to various stakeholders including the local media, scrutiny panels, partners and our workforce that plans were already in place to deliver service improvement prior to the inspection and that this work has continued and been further strengthened to form an improvement plan to cover all recommendations from Ofsted.

## **Key updates since publication of Ofsted report**

5. Since the report was published on 24 January 2017, there have been a number of notable meetings and events which have taken place that relate directly to the SIP.

6. On Friday 17 February 2017, a small delegation from the Council 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.

7. 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.

8. 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 also took place during March 2017.

9. 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 head-teachers.

10. 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.

11. It was a very informative day and a number of key learning points will be incorporated into the Service Improvement Plan. The importance of engaging our partners early in order to deliver successful improvement is a consistent message from our peer learning visits and the Ofsted Action Planning day.

### **Governance of the Service Improvement Plan (SIP)**

12. The Council has 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 Service Improvement Plan.

13. 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 invitation extended by CMR for Children and Families at the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 27 January 2017, the revised membership now includes cross-political party representation, with Elected Members Pattie Hill (Labour), Fran Oborski (2013 Group) and John Thomas (Independent Alliance) joining the Board, along with Senior HMI Ofsted Inspector, Chris Sands.

14. A productive first meeting of the Board established Terms of Reference. There was also positive discussion about the work programme, progress made and focus for the next phase.

15. An independent chair has now also been appointed for the Service Improvement Board. Nigel Richardson (ex-DCS of Leeds City Council), attended the Service Improvement Board meeting on 14 March 2017 in an observational capacity and formally undertook chair responsibilities at the following meeting on 29 March 2017.

16. Appendix 1 is the 'live' master version of the Service Improvement Plan, 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.

17. The Service Improvement Plan 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.

18. The second page illustrates the link the SIP has with other key strategic documents, e.g. the Council'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.

19. 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.

20. 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. Critical friends from partner agencies across all eight work-streams were confirmed at the WSCB meeting on Wednesday 15 March 2017.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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**

24. 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.

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

26. 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

27. 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.

28. 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**

29. 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.

30. 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 WSCB and the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

31. 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 so that a sharp focus is maintained on the key performance metrics.

### **Ofsted Monitoring and Department for Education review**

32. The Council 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.

33. 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 Council.

34. Ofsted monitoring visits will take place over two days with the first day focused on case tracking (6 cases as identified by the Council). 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.

35. Typically, four monitoring visits are scheduled over 12 months, and during this process Ofsted will be in dialogue with the Council 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.

36. 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.

37. On 10 March 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) formally announced the appointment of Trevor Doughty (current DCS in Cornwall) as Children's Services Commissioner to undertake a commissioner-led review of the welfare and safety of children and young people in Worcestershire.

38. An initial 'kick-off' meeting was held on 16 March 2017 outlining the requirements, principles and aims of the review. There are three main aims:

- To provide the Council with the opportunity to provide evidence that it has taken decisive action since the Ofsted inspection and is no longer failing to perform to an adequate standard in the delivery of its children's social care functions

- To assess the Council's capacity and capability to improve itself – within a reasonable timeframe – and to sustain improvement long-term
- To advise the Minister on whether an alternative delivery and governance arrangement for children's social care, outside the operational control of the Council is required.

39. A series of review visits are planned to take place between 28 March 2017 and 14 April 2017 to inform the draft report being prepared by the Commissioner. These visits will be carried out by the Commissioner and a team from Cornwall Council.

40. The Commissioner will then draft a report which is due to be presented to the Minister on 9 June 2017 including recommendations against the three main aims of the review.

### **Strategy Approval**

41. Following a self-assessment exercise and feedback from Ofsted and partners, it was identified that a number of our core Children and Families strategy documents required updating to re-establish key objectives, reflect current practice and set out the improvement required.

42. These strategies include the Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy for Looked after Children and Care Leavers (Appendix 5), the Corporate Parenting Strategy (Appendix 6) and the Care Leavers Strategy (Appendix 7).

43. As a Local Authority, we have a legal duty to ensure steps are taken to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of our looked after children. The Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy for Looked after Children and Care Leavers helps to ensure that we understand, plan and meet future demand for looked after children and care leavers within Worcestershire in order to improve their outcomes.

44. A child or young person who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that they would expect from a good parent in the local community. The Corporate Parenting strategy sets out the Council's approach to ensuring the effective role of a corporate parent across the whole council and partner agencies to our Looked after Children and Care Leavers population. The strategy is key in outlining a leadership and governance structure for corporate parenting in order to drive forward the outcomes for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

45. The Care Leavers Strategy sets out a whole-system approach to supporting our Care Leavers. This is a key strategy to address the needs of our care leavers in Worcestershire and provides a framework for the County Council, District Councils, Elected Members, Officers and Partners to fulfil our duties and responsibilities as Corporate Parents for Care Leavers. It sets out what must be done by whom, to ensure that our care leavers receive the support, help and guidance they may need to live independently and to be able to support themselves.

46. The CMR for Children and Families recommends Cabinet review and approve the attached strategy documents.

## **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

47. A key outcome that the SIP is seeking to achieve is for the Council to become an employer of choice for Children's Social Care, ensuring we have the right capacity, capability and corporate environment for our social work workforce to flourish.

48. One of the eight work-streams within the SIP is 'Support and Develop our Workforce' which includes a number of activities including a review of social work pay, a review of learning and development requirements across the service and the development of a social work academy to establish a local professional hub of best practice for the social work profession.

49. Delivery of the SIP objectives will be achieved through service delivery and/or specific work-streams / projects, each of which will be responsible for ensuring due consideration to legal, financial and HR implications in their planning and implementation.

## **Privacy Impact Assessments**

50. There are no Privacy implications from this report.

## **Public Health Impact Assessments**

51. A Public Health Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of these recommendations. It identified that the realisation of the vision and successful implementation of the priority areas outlined within the Children's Social Care Service Improvement Plan will positively impact on social and economic factors, physical health, mental health and well-being and access to services.

52. Delivery of the SIP will be achieved through service delivery and/or specific programmes / projects, each of which will be responsible for ensuring due consideration to public health impact in their planning and implementation, in particular addressing inequalities.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

53. An Equality Relevance Screening has been carried out in respect of these recommendations. It identified that any Equality and Diversity implications arising from the implementation of the Service Improvement Plan will be addressed as part of specific service delivery arrangements, and/or the implementation of programmes / projects related to the objectives within the SIP.

## **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
- Appendix 5 – Commissioning and Sufficiency strategy (to follow)



- Appendix 6 – Corporate Parenting strategy (to follow)
- Appendix 7 – Care Leavers strategy (to follow)

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763  
Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

### Specific Contact Points for this report

Catherine Driscoll, Director of Children, Families and Communities  
Email: [cdriscoll2@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:cdriscoll2@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Tina Russell, Assistant Director, Safeguarding Services  
Email: [russell@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:russell@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Jake Shaw, Interim Assistant Director, Provider Services  
Email: [jshaw3@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:jshaw3@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Luke Willetts, Senior Delivery Lead  
Email: [lwilletts@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:lwilletts@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## **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 and background papers for the meeting of the Cabinet held on 2 February 2017