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**To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) 21 July 2016**

**Subject: Progress on Children's Services Improvement Plan in response to Ofsted Single Inspection and the Review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board**

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**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 22 June 2016. The report is based on data from May 2016, unless stated otherwise. The next Improvement Board will be held on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny Board 2:
- 1) Note 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 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. The Ofsted report identified a number of priority actions and areas for improvement. In response to the Ofsted report, a Children's Services Improvement Board was established and an Improvement Plan published on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014. A revised and updated Improvement Plan was published on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015. The plan has been further updated, and will be reviewed again with the Independent Chair in July 2016.
- 3.2 The Children's Services Improvement Board on 22 June 2016 was chaired by Steve Hart, the new incoming chair. Mark Rogers, Chief Executive at Birmingham City Council, stepped down from the role as Independent Chair on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016. 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 six weeks.
- 3.3 The Department for Education issued an Improvement Notice on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The Improvement notice is reviewed every six months by the Department for Education. Reviews were completed on 20 January 2015, 30 June 2016 and 2 February 2016.
- 3.4 The Independent Chairs of both the Improvement Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board also submit a written report to the Minister on a regular basis.
- 3.5 An Executive Board was established in January 2015 in order to focus on maintaining momentum and evaluating progress against the Improvement Plan. This Board meets every six weeks prior to the Improvement Board.

- 3.6 The Council, alongside partner organisations will retain a relentless focus on securing improvements in services for children, young people and families to ensure they are safeguarded and achieve positive outcomes.

#### **4 Improvement Plan Themes**

- 4.1 The Children's Services Improvement Plan, includes six key themes, which have been aligned to the DfE improvement notice. The plan provides a stronger focus on quality of practice and workforce development, and the continuation of improvements to the LSCB. A summary of the plan is shown in **Appendix 1**. The six themes are as follows and will be subject to change pending a review of the plan.

- Early Help & Partnership Working
- Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Quality and Effectiveness of Practice
- Quality of Assurance and Audit
- Leadership and Governance
- Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency

#### **5 Children's Services Improvement Plan Progress to date**

- 5.1 The new leadership is continuing to provide the renewed focus and direction. Middle management teams are stable and committed. The new improvement partners are working at pace to help deliver the improvements and changes required.
- 5.2 The new Independent Chair has proposed a number of actions to maintain and accelerate the development of good and better services for children and young people in Coventry. The following will be addressed as a result of the Independent Chair's initial analysis of improvement activity and its impact at the front line:
1. The pace of change will be accelerated.
  2. The work and objectives of the Board will be more aligned with operational front line managers, practitioners and partners who are charged with delivering the changes.
  3. The Improvement Plan will be re-focused for change in the short term to mitigate the risks.
- 5.3 The Improvement Board members endorsed the specific actions to be delivered in the short term and agreed to moving forward on the proposals.
- 5.4 A revised proposal for rationalising and focusing the objectives and priorities of the Improvement Plan will be discussed at the next Improvement Board on 14 September 2016.
- 5.5 The following progress was reported at the Children's Services Improvement Board on 22 June 2016.

#### **6 Theme 1 – Early Help and Partnership**

- 6.1 Coventry City Council Early Help and Prevention Services hold 67.3% of all CAFs, with external agencies making up the other 32.7%. The number of CAF's held by external agencies is improving each month as further work is completed to redress the balance, the target is 40%.
- 6.2 CAF Co co-ordinators have refocused to concentrate on delivering additional support to the largest external partners e.g. schools, in particular primary schools, ensuring that when an issue or problem first emerges with a family that schools have the ability and skills to deliver interventions that have the greatest impact.

- 6.3 The issue to address step up/step down between children's social care and early help is being progressed. An audit has been completed by the Head of Safeguarding, 30 early help cases have been audited where step up is a feature. The report highlights areas of work that need further development and improvement, all recommendations will be implemented and monitored in the Early Help action plan.
- 6.4 The re-referral rate still remains high, and has increased significantly in May to 32.7%. The conversion of contacts to referrals from agencies identifies that 54% of the police contacts are converted to referrals. However education conversion for May is only 32% conversion and health is 21%. Further work is being undertaken in determining the impact on the re-referral rate or whether these contacts have been MASHED. There has been ongoing activity with partners to analyse the low conversion and contacts that do not meet threshold to support a shared understanding of threshold.
- 6.5 Contacts remain stable at 1671 which is not dissimilar amount when compared with the same time in 2015. Education are still the highest single referring agency accounting for 30.7% of the contacts within the month of May 2016.
- 6.6 Timeliness is still an issue due to the amount of work that is received in to the service that is then not converted to referrals.
- 6.7 Children and Family assessments remain on track with 94.8% completed under 45 days. The quality of Children and Family assessments is still variable and continues to be scrutinised by first line managers and service managers.
- 6.8 There has been a significant increase in children and young people being reported missing. The increase is due to better recording and a more robust approach to those young people who would have initially been deemed as "absent" rather than missing.

## **7 Theme 2 - Local Safeguarding Children Board**

- 7.1 The Local Safeguarding Children's Board provides a regular progress update to the Improvement Board to highlight progress against the three requirements set out in the improvement Notice. These are:
- the LSCB to be strengthened so it can ensure that partners work together effectively
  - multi-agency practice and individual partner audits are robust
  - all partners are committed to a shared set of priorities for safeguarding, child protection and early intervention.
- 7.2 The following progress was reported to the Improvement Board on 22 June 2016: The chair highlighted the excellent safeguarding work being undertaken at Aldermoor Primary School.
- 7.3 Work continues on improving the dissemination of learning from serious case reviews (SCRs), peer review panels, surveys and audits and the voice of the child. As part of the annual review of training programmes, training on working with hard to engage families is being revised in response to what is known about current practice in Coventry.
- 7.4 The findings of recent Board multi-agency audits have now been analysed and reported. Following audit work by social care on the rise in re-referrals, a Board multi-agency audit looked at referrals and the application of thresholds. Some good practice was found, but in too many cases, recording needed improvement.
- 7.5 A further audit looked at care planning. Information and decision making recording often lacked detail and focus on outcomes. Some plans lacked clarity and focus on the rationale for action. Where the voice of the child was evident in plans, there was a clearer focus on

achieving better outcomes for the child, but too many plans failed to adequately reflect the voice of the child

- 7.6 A third audit examined responses to missing young people. Improvements were noted including work with young people to complete return home interviews in most cases. However, information gained from the interviews is not yet being used to inform planning for the young people in question.
- 7.7 The audits were discussed by the Board and some recommendations were made for action in response to the audit findings. The Effectiveness and Quality subgroup of the Board is now action planning for improvement and will report back to Board after six months.

## 8 Theme 3 - Quality and Effectiveness of Practice

- 8.1 Children's Services recognises that the workforce is its most valuable resource. A key element in delivering high quality services is improving the effectiveness of the recruitment of permanent social work staff across all teams and strengthening the service's ability to retain a high quality experienced workforce.
- 8.2 The Strategy embraces the priority of Children's Services to put children and young people at the centre of all its work. Human Resources and Children's Services has developed a range of recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of good quality staff within the organization.
- 8.3 The service has successfully appointed a Principal Social Worker, and will be joining in the autumn.
- 8.4 An in-house social media recruitment campaign launched on 22 April 2016. The campaign has targeted experienced Social Workers through a range of digital and social media platforms to specifically target active and passive job seekers based on their connections, their internet usage and the organisations they support and champion. Over 100 Web Adverts and created an email marketing Campaign to reach over 1000 Experienced Social workers based in Ireland to inform of the vacancies and the relocation package.
- 8.5 The table below summaries activity up to 3 June 2016. A total of 48 offers have been made:

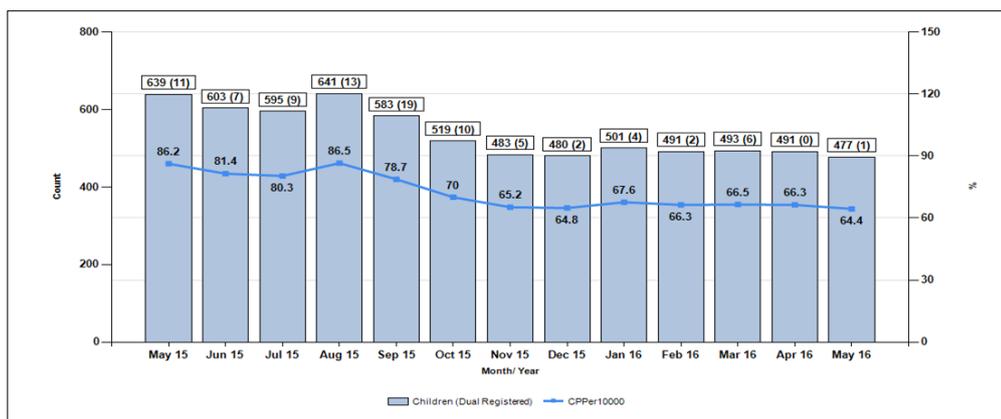
**Table 1: Recruitment Activity for the period 11 February – 3 June 2016**

Source of recruitment	No. of CV's received	No. of interviews held	No. of offers during this period
TMP Recruitment campaign	27	18	1 Service Manager 5 experienced Social Workers
Sanctuary	23	17	2 experienced Social Workers
Other agencies	4	4	3 experienced Social Workers
Internal candidates	6	2	1 Team Manager 1 Newly Qualified Social Workers
Compass Jobs Fair – March 2016	140	61	23 Newly Qualified Social Workers
NQSW's applying for posts	23	20	5 Newly Qualified Social Worker
Converting agency staff to permanent	12	7	7 agency staff converted to Experienced Social Worker
In house social media	22		Applications are currently being reviewed
<b>Total</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>A total of 48 offers:</b> 1 Service Manager 17 experienced Social Workers 1 Team Managers 29 Newly Qualified Social Workers In addition to this 11 candidates have withdrawn from the process

8.6 The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has decreased to 477 in May 2016 and continues to be lower than it has been since 2013. The indicator appears to have stabilised with no great increases since October 2015. The more stable number is a positive sign. This indicates that children are receiving support earlier and in a less reactive way. Signs of Safety is gradually beginning to focus not just on child protection plans but also on the use of safety plans. The number of children subject to a plan for 2 years plus continues to be higher than that of statistical neighbours but is relative to an overall higher number.

8.7 Table 2 below highlights numbers over the last 12 months:

Table 2: Child Protection Plans



## 9 Theme 4 - Quality Assurance and Audit

- 9.1 Coventry City Council Children's Services have since November 2015 developed a stronger more robust programme of audits to inform continuous practice improvement. Audits have been undertaken by a number of different sources, including, Practice Improvement Partners and the LSCB. The outcomes of each audit have led to the construction of action plans, focused on using the findings of audits to drive up the quality of practice.
- 9.2 The results of audits have reinforced findings across a range of different services along the child's journey. This has allowed for some triangulation and definitive conclusions in relation to both the strengths and weaknesses in practice across the whole of the Children's Service.
- 9.3 In April 2016, a Threshold/Missing and Care Planning audit have been completed jointly with the LSCB. Action Plans have been developed and are being implemented.
- 9.4 Work has begun with Early Help staff around the need for intervention which is focused and has clear outcomes and timescales. This has been facilitated through the audit work. The Care planning audit will lead to work being done with Child Protection Chairs around child centred outcomes and plans which are achievable for families. A session has been held with early help to look at the purpose and quality of their intervention and further sessions working with staff are planned. A session has also taken place with the child protection chairs to specifically gain a common understanding of what a good child protection plan should look like.

## 10 Theme 5 - Leadership and Governance

- 10.1 The Supervision Policy has been reviewed. A presentation was delivered to Board members on the new policy and supervision activity across the service.

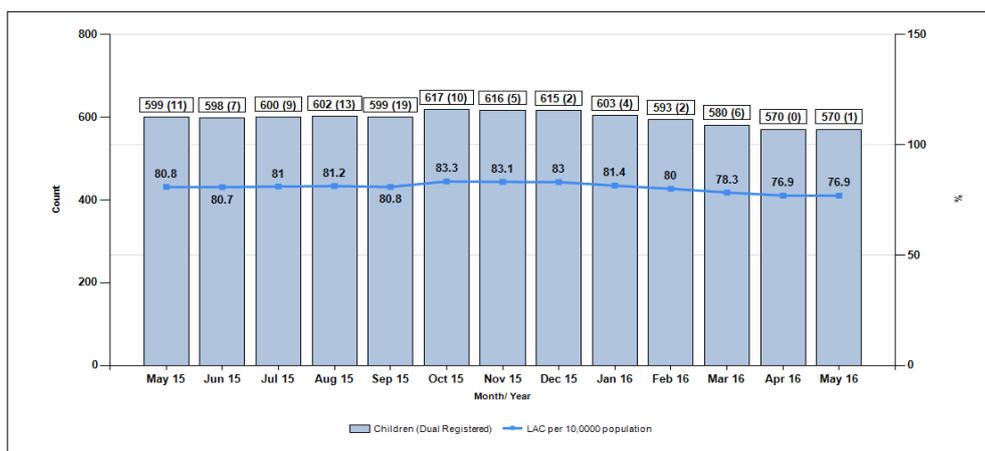
10.2 The revised policy provides more direction and guidance and tools for staff. The service are continuing to push the quality of practice and have a clear understanding of what good supervision looks like and how it is recorded. Supervision sessions are taking place and are critical to make sense of decisions around the child.

**11 Theme 6 - Services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency**

11.1 The total number of children looked after by the local authority has reduced since the new DCS was appointed. This is a result of better management oversight and grip

11.2 The table below highlights the direction of travel over the last twelve months for the numbers of Looked After Children.

**Table 3: Number of Looked After Children**



11.3 There are currently 71 children (12.6%) of children in residential care which is higher than the national average. A review of children in residential provision has recently been carried out and as a result 7 will be moving into supported accommodation, and a further 4 are having their plans reviewed.

11.4 The percentage of children in internal foster care remains at 29.6 %. A streamlined fostering recruitment and assessment pathway has led to an increase in the number of fostering assessments. A specialist fostering scheme has been developed. These initiatives, plus robust tracking of children, will help to reduce the number of children in residential care and increase children in fostering placements.

11.5 54 children were adopted in 2015/16. At the end of May 2016, 39 children have been placed for adoption a further 15 applications are lodged with the courts.

11.6 Coventry is now working formally with the regional adoption agency partners to ensure the larger pool of adopters recruited and approved are assessed and that where possible all children are provisionally linked to approved adopters before a Placement Order is granted.

11.7 A Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed to set out the rationale and associated activity which will enable better local understanding of the looked after children system and lead to improved life chances for children in and leaving the care of Coventry City Council.

**12 Communication**

12.1 The e-newsletter continues to be produced focusing on Children’s Services ahead of Ofsted re-inspection. 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

achieving a better Ofsted result. In addition to this, the Director of Children's Services completes a regular blog.

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## Appendix 1

### A One Page Summary of the Children's Services Improvement Plan March 2015

*Note: Themes 1-5 theme are aligned to the DfE notice, the additional theme highlights services for LAC, Care Leavers and Permanency*



### Key Challenges

**Sustainability** - managing future work volumes, resourcing and sustainability of improvements

**Evidencing Impact** - evidencing improvements and the impact on achieving good outcomes for children, young people and families

