

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

5 October 2016

Report title	Children's Services Self Assessment - 'Our Story' and Improvement Plan	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children & Young People	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Children and Young People	
Originating service	Children and Young People	
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Report to be/has been considered by	People Leadership Team – 5 Sept 2016 Strategic Executive Board – 13 Sept 2016 Strategic Executive Board – 27 Sept 2016	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Note the updated Children's Services Self Assessment - 'Our Story' (Appendix One).
2. Review and scrutinise progress made in delivering improvements across Children's Services as outlined in the Improvement Plan and Performance Update (Appendices Two and Three).

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel the updated self-assessment of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; and progress on the delivery of the associated Children's Services Improvement Plan.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework for inspecting services for children in need of help and protection and reviewing Local Safeguarding Children Boards was published in March 2015. The document sets out the framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. All Local Authorities will be inspected under this framework within a three-year period. Wolverhampton's last Inspection took place in June 2011 when the Local Authority was judged to be good for looked after children and adequate in relation to safeguarding. This Single Inspection Framework will be completed by December 2017. Ofsted are currently consulting on a new inspection framework for Children's social care.
- 2.2 The inspections are conducted under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. They focus on the effectiveness of Local Authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, the experiences and progress of children looked after, including adoption, fostering, the use of residential care and children who return home. The framework also focuses on the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after and the experiences and progress of care leavers. In addition, there is a judgement on leadership, management and governance which addresses the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of professional practice.
- 2.3 To support the Ofsted process, a range of information is requested, at short notice, which includes local context and geography; delivery/organisational structures/ performance information including complaints; assessment and threshold criteria; supervision policies; training and development strategy; local strategic needs analysis; and feedback from any peer review type activity. The "Our Story" self-assessment seeks to bring this information together at a high level with a range of links to more detailed documents and action plans.
- 2.4 The self-assessment includes information against each of the five Ofsted Judgements on strengths and areas which require further development/improvement. A high level Improvement Plan has been developed which clearly outlines the actions that are in place to improve services and outcomes for children and young people.
- 2.5 A Transforming Children's Services Programme Board, chaired by the Strategic Director for People, was set up in December 2015. The Board meets monthly and has been set up to manage, co-ordinate and oversee the implementation of a range of projects across Children's Services. Progress on the implementation of the improvement plan is regularly reviewed by the Board.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The Children's Services Improvement Plan and Our Story have recently been updated to reflect the position as at the end of June 2016 in terms of performance, improvement activity and local strengths and areas for development against the five Ofsted Judgements. Local determination of progress against the judgements includes:
- The experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection
Requires Improvement
 - The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence
Good
 - Adoption Performance
Good
 - The experiences and progress of care leavers
Requires Improvement
 - Leadership, Management and Governance
Good
- 3.2 In April 2016, the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board conducted a self-assessment to establish the effectiveness of the Board using the Ofsted Framework and the statutory guidance Working Together (2015). The overall assessment, against the Ofsted Framework, is '**Good**'.
- 3.3 During May and June 2016, six half day workshops were held with staff from Social Care, Early Intervention and Specialist Support Services. The sessions were primarily aimed at raising awareness of progress that has been made across Children's Services over the last two years; providing detail on the children's transformation programme and key priorities going forward; and sharing the Self-Assessment, providing the opportunity for individuals to confirm and/or challenge the local position. The sessions were positively received and feedback generally supported the identified strengths and areas for development.
- 3.4 The following information summarises key areas of progress against the themes set out in the Improvement Plan:
- 3.4.1 **Quality & Effectiveness of Practice:**
- Revised audit process, supporting guidance and tools agreed by Children & Young People's Management Team - due to be launched in September 2016.
 - Quality Assurance Framework currently being refreshed to include neglect, the use of service user forums and senior management observation of practice – completion date October 2016.
 - Bi-monthly case file audits – audit tool updated to focus on quality of practice and outcomes for children that are aligned to Ofsted descriptors. Further review of the tool to ensure that it captures the voice of those present during observations – completion date October 2016.

- Self-evaluation process takes place on a quarterly basis – 20 cases audited by a range of professionals from Social Care, Early Intervention and partner agencies. Includes focus groups with frontline practitioners. August process has focused on domestic violence.
- Improvements in achieving statutory 45 day timescales for assessments. Quality assurance processes are showing an improving picture in quality of assessments, plans, analysis and management oversight. More focus required on recording rationale.
- Ingson independent file audit and internal quality assurance activity evidences improvements in the voice of the child throughout assessment. Further focus required in relation to child being seen alone as part of Child Protection/Looked After Children visits. Dip sample undertaken in June and July – outcome available in September 2016.
- Revised CareFirst forms and practice processes implemented 3 May 2016 – Ingson undertaking a review of impact in September 2016.
- Six Advanced Practitioners recruited but not yet in post due to backfill process, to work across teams to improve the quality of management and practice.
- Competence based supervision model - policy approved by the People Workforce Development Board, 2 August 2016.
- Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) Neglect Training to be rolled out along with further elements around whole family approach and working with large sibling groups in October 2016.
- Ingson have been commissioned to undertake case file audits relating to neglect cases with a particular focus on sibling groups in August – will further inform planned training of staff.
- Established People ICT Steering Group. Thirty professionals from across Children's Services currently piloting mobile devices. Early indications are that they are supporting individuals to work more efficiently and effectively. Roll-out planned by the end of September 2016.

3.4.2 **Workforce:**

- Children's Services Workforce Development Plan 2016/17 agreed by Children's Workforce Development Group on 10 May 2016.
- Social Work Career Development Pathway currently being reviewed and re-launched.
- Principal Social Worker leading on implementation of restorative practice across Children's Services workforce – to be fully implemented by October 2017.
- Children & Family training in assessment, risk analysis/outcome based planning and permanency delivered to Social Workers and Early Intervention Staff. Eight cohorts commissioned (160 places); six cohorts have been delivered; cohort seven is in progress and will be completed end of September; cohort eight will be completed by the end of October 2016.
- Ingson have delivered three workshops to social care managers in May 2016. They have now been commissioned to deliver a further six action learning sets in September 2016 with grade eight workers in Social Care, Early Help and Specialist Support focusing on dealing with poor performance; defensible decision making; ensuring good management oversight; management styles; and what does good look like. Work will also take place with grade nine social work managers on how to work together in a more integrated way.

3.4.3 **Early Help:**

- Early Intervention 0-18 and Specialist Support Services fully implemented and operational from August 2016.
- Remaining vacancies being advertised – all staff to be in post by end of September 2016.
- Eight Strengthening Families Hubs to be fully operational by October 2016.
- Review of operational and strategic multi-agency working arrangements within localities to be completed and implemented by October 2016.
- Locality Conferences to take place during September and October 2016.
- Two Year Old Offer – 71% take up against a target of 70%.
- Continuing to work with Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust to develop single child record to improve universal contact with families.
- Early Years Strategy Group established; Early Years Strategy to be developed by October 2016.
- All staff in Early Intervention trained in the use of Outcome Star. Early indications are that the tool is being used effectively, demonstrating a change in the workers' challenge of families and more effective management oversight.

3.4.4 **Children in Need of Help and Protection:**

- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) established and being extended to include adults by the end of August 2016.
- Adult MASH staff recruited and co-locating on 22 August 2016.
- Review of the Children's MASH leading to consolidation of Early Intervention and Social Care staff to improve first point of contact into the MASH.
- MASH Improvement Plan produced and due to be presented to MASH Strategic Board on 6 September 2016.
- Fortnightly dip sampling, leading to continuous review and improvement of practice.
- Social Worker from Children's Disability Team is now co-located in the MASH, ensuring all referrals come through a single front door.
- Interim MASH Service Manager in place, interviews for permanent post mid-September 2016.
- Specialist Support Service fully implemented in August 2016.
- Improvement in adhering to the 26 week timescales for care proceedings – 80% concluded within 26 weeks in June 2016. Earlier use of Public Law Outline (PLO) pre-proceedings process being tracked.
- Monthly meetings with Legal Services to review all current court cases including those at risk of exceeding statutory timescales – this will be extended to include reviewing all cases subject to PLO.
- Progress on development of Black Country Emergency Duty Service. Agreement has been reached that this will be a tripartite system between Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton. Walsall has opted out of the arrangement. The new service will be implemented by April 2017.

3.4.5 **Looked After Children:**

- Framework for therapeutic services has been developed and a local policy to support the process to access services has been agreed.

- Intensive Family Support providing out of hours support to the Emergency Duty Team leading to crisis work and preventing family breakdown.
- Upper Pendeford Farm providing an effective short break centre to young people on the edge of care aged 10 and over – actions in place to increase occupancy rate and encourage use for 'planned' short breaks.
- Numbers of Looked After Children reduced from 778 2014/15 to 638 as of 8 August 2016. Target for 2016/17 is between 550 and 580.
- Process in place to ensure that Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire will always be completed in advance of all Review Health Assessments which will be considered as part of the assessment.
- Good education results for looked after children in Key Stage One and Two.
- 82% of looked after children in year 2012/13 have an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) at the end of June 2016.
- Early Years Foundation Stage PEP in place with 43% completion rate at July 2016.
- Key Stage Four performance in 2015 well above national average. Key Stage Four results for Looked After Children have been above national average for three years.
- Eligible Looked After Children currently in Employment, Education or Training (EET) – 90%; excluding those Not Available to the Labour Market (NALM); 89% including NALM.
- Persistent absence is improving for looked after children – 3.7% in 2014/15; 5% in 2013/14; 5.6% in 2012/13. 2016 average attendance of Out of City Looked After Children was 96% in January 2016.
- Significant progress in delivery of the Sufficiency Strategy: end of March 2016, the number of looked after children in residential placements reduced by 35% compared to the end of March 2014; regional and sub-regional framework agreements for residential and foster care have been reviewed and renewed; new services commissioned to support both prevention and admission to care i.e. Safe Haven.
- Work is underway to refresh the Sufficiency Strategy for the next three years.
- 242 children in Local Authority and Connected Persons placements (57 Connected Persons and 185 mainstream fostering placements)
- 252 children in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements compared to 264 in April 2016.
- Family and Friends and In-House Foster Care Placements – monthly permanency clinics in place to consider the options of permanency planning.
- Target for 2016/17 – 30 newly approved foster carers.
- Working with iMPower to explore opportunities for further improvement and transformation within fostering.
- Action plan in place to increase private fostering – this has not yet had an impact on numbers reported. Marketing Plan to be reviewed to ensure a targeted approach.
- Strategic Corporate Parenting Group meeting quarterly with membership from across the Council and partners.
- Care leavers and looked after children feature in the council delivery of work experience; traineeships; apprenticeships; and internships. Packages of support are being developed for manager and educators to support young people.
- Business case progressing to exempt all care leavers from paying Council Tax.
- Web page developed and launched specifically for looked after children and care leavers.

- Mandatory e-learning module has been developed for all council employees, including Councillors, to understand the support they can offer to looked after children and care leavers as corporate parents. This will be launched in September 2016.
- Action plan to increase the use of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) approved by Children & Young People Management Team on 23 June 2016. 2015/16 – 24 SGOs – 12 of those were looked after children. Target for 2016/17 – 25 Connected Persons/SGO Carers.
- SGO Workshops with Social Care staff took place in July 2016; SGO Module to be delivered as part of Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Programme; monthly surgeries to discuss practice and specific cases held by SGO Worker at Priory Green and Beldray; SGO leaflets and written information updated and SGO to be discussed in all viability assessments.
- Significantly reduced the number of placements with parents – 53 discharged in 2015/16 and eight discharged to date in 2016/17. As of July 2016, there are 46 children placed at home, including eight since April 2016 that have moved from foster care to being placed back at home and four that are placed with parents on Individual Care Orders (ICOs). Seventeen planned revocations by September 2016. All placements with parents are subject to revocation plans from the outset.

3.4.6 **Adoption:**

- Phase one of the development of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) has been completed. Transition plan and financial plan submitted. DfE are assessing submissions for phase two and outcome of this is pending. A preferred delivery vehicle has been agreed by Directors of Children's Services. Work continues on the financial modelling and service design. Report going to Cabinet in November 2016 seeking approval for the delivery model and financial commitment.
- Action plan in place which is driving improvement in timeliness and assessment of adopters. 18 adopters recruited during 2015/16. Target for 2016/17 is 30. As of August 2016, 12 adopters have been approved.
- April 2016 – August 2016: 16 Adoption Support Assessments; 10 applications to the Adoption Support Fund; no Adoption breakdowns.

3.4.7 **Care Leavers:**

- Twelve Looked After Children/Care Leavers are currently in higher education. A further five are expected to enter in September 2016, totalling 17 Looked After Children/Care Leavers in higher education and maintaining positive previous performance.
- 67% of Care Leavers in year 2012/13 are currently in Employment, Education or Training (excluding those Not Available to the Labour Market). This is in line with national averages.
- In 2015, 74% of the year 13 cohort (both Looked After Children and Care Leavers) achieved qualifications and 25% achieved A-level or equivalent. Only 13% of this cohort were Not in Employment, Education or Training at December 2015.
- Second annual care leavers survey has been undertaken and outcomes show there is an increase in the amount of young people who felt:
 - they have a good relationship with their worker;
 - they were making decisions for themselves;
 - they were better prepared and supported to leave care;

- safe in their accommodation and that it meets their needs;
- they were adequately supported with budgeting;
- they were supported with health and well being
- Care Leavers Charter approved by Cabinet and will be distributed in Care Leavers Packs.
- Looked After Children Transitions Team will be piloting MOMO, a mobile app whereby young people can communicate with their Independent Reviewing Officer, Social Worker and Young Person Advisor.
- Three bespoke traineeships have been offered with support through the council with Wolverhampton College Course and Work Placements secured.
- An EET Worker has been recruited through the Youth Employment Initiative Grant – the post will be shared across the Youth Offending Team and the Transitions Team.
- Rolling training programme for Foster Carers to support them in enabling young people to establish independent living skills during their time in foster care.
- Expansion of service to 30 LAC Transition Flats including one training flat and two crash pads.
- Twelve Housing Support Workers approved – service provision extended to 8am-8pm Monday to Friday and 10am-5pm at the weekend.
- Pathway Plan dip sample completed in April 2016, which showed that the workers have a good relationship with the young people, however the Pathway Plans must have a greater focus on the tasks needed, who by and by when.
- Recent dip sampling for statutory visits has improved from Requires Improvement to Good overall in the last three months.
- Introduction of revised Staying Put Policy leading to an additional 15 young people remaining with their Foster Carers by March 2017.
- Improvement in percentage of children missing from education as a result of the admission process: 2013/14 – 71%; 2014/15 – 65%; 2015/16 – 63%; as of 6 June 2016 – 43.6%.
- LAC being given top priority in Wolverhampton schools; primary/secondary transition closely supported by Corporate Parenting and Education (COPE).
- Agency Joint Working Attendance Protocol currently being reviewed.
- Home Education – Elective Home Education (EHE) Policy has been updated to ensure multi-agency meetings are held where there are safeguarding/welfare concerns about a young person; implementing a more robust recording EHE monitoring visits and reasons for parents opting to EHE.
- Significant improvement in educational outcomes for looked after children and a reducing gap between LAC and their peers.
- Draft Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Strategy and Implementation Plan approved and will form the basis of the Self Assessment Document for the Care Quality Commission/Ofsted SEND Joint Area Review.
- Head of SEND appointed to commence in post 22 August 2016 to work closely with all relevant internal and external partners to ensure that the SEND agenda is progressed in line with legislative and local expectations.

3.4.8 ***Child Sexual Exploitation/Missing, Domestic Violence and Female Genital Mutilation:***

- The Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) is being revised to ensure that agencies making a referral are sufficiently considering risks relating to Child Sexual Exploitation.
- A Child Sexual Exploitation Training Plan for staff is currently being developed to support the revised pathways/reporting processes.
- The Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy has been reviewed and reflects the expectations of all professionals. A review of electronic recording processes is currently underway.
- Interim Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator in place and recruitment for permanent post taking place in November 2016.
- Increase in May and June 2016 of missing notifications – work is underway with the police to ensure that the new police procedure for reporting absent and missing episodes is capturing all cases that should be notified as missing.
- Overall percentage of missing return interviews completed within 72 hours in July 2016 is 46%. Figure low due to several of the same young people going missing a number of times in close succession.
- Vulnerable Young Persons Team now completing the majority of missing return interviews.
- Looked After Children Service developed an action plan to address issues with Looked After Children who go missing frequently from care. Missing Return Officer to take up post imminently which will enable further development of the pathway to include communication with caseworkers when young people do not engage in the return interview process.
- Intelligence and data obtained from Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings is now shared with the Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator to inform the dataset and the developing Wolverhampton Problem Profile.
- A review of MASE documentation has been completed and is being implemented in August 2016.
- Review of multi-agency domestic violence screening process and revised policy/procedure and improvement plan to be presented to the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board in September 2016.
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Policy and Procedure now published on Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board website. Policy formed part of inter-agency briefings which took place in June 2016. Wolverhampton had the first prosecution for FGM in the country.

3.4.9 ***Participation and Feedback:***

- Stakeholder Group established to oversee the implementation of MOMO App – designed to increase feedback from children and young people and input into reviews. App due to go live in October 2016.
- Leaflet developed for children attending conferences which include a form for them to share their views at conference.
- WSCB agreed that the Child Protection Conference Pilot will be rolled out across Wolverhampton in September 2016.
- Participation Strategy approved by Strategic Executive Board on 28 June 2016 and going to Cabinet in September 2016.

- All reports for Corporate Parenting Board are viewed by Children in Care Council to ensure their views are noted and reflected in the reports.
- The Youth Council is now representative of the population and includes schools, children in care, care leavers, vulnerable young people, B-Safe and the voluntary sector.
- A campaign for new members of the Children In Care Council took place during April 2016 increasing the membership from seven to 13 young people.
- A Wolverhampton Youth Voice Conference took place in August 2016 at Condover.
- The next Youth Council Elections in Schools and Community Groups are planned for November 2016.

3.4.10 **Youth Offending Team:**

- Exceeded target for young offenders in education, employment and training – 2015/16: 58% against a target of 55%.
- Virtual School Head has incorporated YOT needs into the Model Schools Policy and is progressing an integrated approach to the needs of YOT and LAC young people.
- Inspection action plan reviewed at YOT Management Board on 27 July – RAG ratings remained the same, three actions are completed and the rest remain on track.
- Work required to progress a joint protocol and standards between Youth Offending Team and Social Care detailing good practice in relation to partnership working, sharing information, communication and attendance at meetings to deliver joint planning that improves outcomes for children and young people.

3.4.11 **Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board**

- Developed 12 month CSE specific work plan, monitored through Sexual Exploitation, Missing and Trafficked Committee.
- Independent Chair meeting front line practitioners to understand impact of training in relation to improving practice.
- SCR Committee utilising a number of different models to ensure learning is achieved from situations where SCR threshold is met.
- Actively involved in development of regional policies and procedures, ensuring that they are underpinned by a local pathway.
- Approved Neglect Strategy and agreed rollout of training across agencies.
- Developing a Directory of Voluntary, Community and Faith Groups to ensure that safeguarding messages can be widely communicated.
- Increased multi-agency indicators which will capture practice arrangements across the wider Board partners.
- Child Death Overview Panel have reviewed the cross border processes to ensure accuracy of information and aligned approaches to oversight of child deaths.

3.5 **Conclusion**

Children's Services are on a positive improvement journey. The transformation of Early Intervention, introduction of the Specialist Support Service and implementation of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub has provided a robust foundation for ensuring sustained improvement. Educational outcomes for LAC continue to improve and performance within children's social care is generally stable or improving. The political, corporate and managerial leadership that is in place, together with the excellent partnership working relationships in Wolverhampton, puts us in an excellent position to continue to drive and

deliver the service transformation required to improve the experiences and outcomes for our children, young people and families.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The approved total budget for Children and Young People for 2016/17 is £47.0 million.
- 4.2 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.
[NM/21092016/F]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.
[TS/20092016/E]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 There are no equality implications associated with this report.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications associated with this report.