

From:	Gladys Rhodes White Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services	Date:	10 th February 2015
To:	Improvement Board		
Subject:	Progress Report		

1. Purpose of Report

This report provides a summary update on the progress and actions taken since the last meeting of the Improvement Board on 16th January towards meeting the improvements required to meet the Ofsted recommendations.

2. Summary of Key Actions taken since the last Improvement Board meeting

Improvement Notice

Discussions have progressed with DFE colleagues with regard to the Improvement Notice and assurance has been given that the draft is to be forwarded to the Minister of State for approval, therefore the issue of this is imminent. Once received the action plan and tracker will be reviewed to ensure that all are aligned and a copy will be circulated to Improvement Board members.

Ofsted

A very helpful conversation with Simone White took place recently to discuss what practical support may be able from Ofsted colleagues to support us with our improvement journey. They do not have a formal improvement offer as such at the moment they are currently piloting different approaches, however they are planning to have a formal offer in place at end March/early April. It has been agreed that an initial meeting will take place and following on from that agreement will be reached as to what future support we may require. Views from Improvement Board members on this would be welcome.

Investment Case

The revised investment case has now been approved by members and we now need to focus on delivering the return on that investment. The priorities include a reduction in LAC and associated costs, a continued focus on improving early help, sustaining our Troubled Families programme and improving the quality of social work practice and leadership. A workshop with senior managers will be delivered on 4th February to consider all the strands of work in the investment and improvement plan.

Following the Ofsted inspection the agreed budget for the action plan for 2014/15 is £1m with £500k to be funded from the Adoption Reform Grant (13/14 carry

forward) and £500k from Corporate resources as agreed with the Executive in October 2014. As at the end of January expenditure was £335k and the projected expenditure is £914k. The £86k projected underspend is due to the timing of recruitment of staff into the agreed temporary posts. The Recruitment to the Early Help posts is planned to start 15/16. For the integrated front door posts 2 social workers have been recruited to the contact Centre and will start 1/03/15. There has been an agency social worker covering for the last month. The MASH operations manager has been recruited to and will start on 23/02/15. The Emergency Duty social worker and the social worker for MARAC are in the process of recruitment and an agency worker is being sourced to cover in the meantime. Business support for the MASH is being covered internally whilst recruitment is underway. The additional social work capacity (additional temporary social work capacity and caseload capacity) will be for ten weeks and started from the end of January. The tender for the Children in Need closed on 9/02/15 and there has been good interest in this. Decisions about the provider will be made on 27/02/15 with a view to being operational in March. The care planning additional posts are in the process of recruitment

Social Work Taskforce

The Taskforce of 16 external Social Workers and 3 Team Managers discussed at the last board started work with us on Monday 2nd February. They have been commissioned to re assess all of the Child In Need cases that are currently sat on Social Workers caseloads. The Taskforce Social Workers will undertake a Child and Family Assessment (CAFA). A framework has been written for the Task Force to use which will provide both them and MCC with standards to manage quality and timescales by.

Reconfiguring Children's Services

A workshop with partners took place on 16th January to start to discuss what the future model for Children's Services needs to look like to be able to respond to meet demand now and in the future. Next steps include work to be progress on the vision for the future service and workshops on Early Help to take place with a follow up workshop in six weeks time.

Emergency Duty Service

A review of the Emergency Duty Service was commissioned and a draft options appraisal report produced. There is an opportunity to involve Health and Police colleagues in redesigning our "out of hours" offer, to see if there is the potential to create a more integrated response. This is under consideration.

Recruitment

Mandy Lyons started on 2nd February on an interim basis as the Head of Safeguarding. Plans are being progressed to recruit a Deputy DCS and a Head of Fostering and Adoption

Action Plan

Following discussion at the last Improvement Board meeting the action plan has been revised to ensure its focus on addressing the Ofsted recommendations. A workshop with members of the Improvement Board Executive took place on 30th January to share an early draft and to seek their feedback and contributions. The final draft will be widely circulated as it will need to be owned by many colleagues across the City to enable us to deliver on the identified improvements in the plan.

3. Progress on implementing the Ofsted Priority & Immediate Actions

Quality of practice and capacity

Review the number of cases held by all staff, including newly qualified staff, to ensure that caseloads are manageable and that staff have sufficient time to plan and action their work. Ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably experienced and qualified staff to deal effectively with current demand.

All social worker vacancies were recruited to in November, with some agency staff taking permanent positions. Since November there have been further vacancies and the 15 staff that had been identified for the peripatetic team have been used to fill these vacancies. The peripatetic team will help manage sickness and absence. Challenge re turnover still exists and an advert has gone out to continue the recruitment so we can manage the current turnover rate. At the same time working to get a better work life balance for social workers to help retention. The board will be tracking this on a monthly basis to monitor whether we are making the required impact. There has been a good response to this latest

advert and it is anticipated that the 15 peripatetic Social Workers will be recruited in this round. (see A1 on the performance tracker)

Julie Heslop, an experienced strategic lead is working with colleagues to redesign Early Help. Immediate work has begun on mapping and reviewing the provision. A workshop took place in January with partners and two are planned for 13th February to review levels of needs and to inform the refresh the Early Help strategy. Work is also underway to develop Family Hubs across the City.

Ensure robust management oversight on the single assessment process, at both first tier and senior management level, to ensure that children and families are seen and risks evaluated in a timescale to meet need. Ensure timeliness in completing assessments by reviewing at set points to ensure that children are seen promptly, and that all work is recorded to an appropriate standard.

Following a Performance Improvement session with all managers, details of cases with potential drift have been identified and sent to team managers so they can identify the reasons and take appropriate action. This will also be discussed and progress monitored at the performance clinics scheduled to start on the 27th February.

Performance in terms of assessments completed in time has dipped due to an increase in referrals and annual leave over Xmas. (See A2 on the performance tracker)

The revised core audit tool and new reporting function will enable us to analyse audit findings and report on discreet groups, these being CIN, CP, and LAC. In order to develop a more robust practise model for children in need current guidance for visiting patterns and case planning are being refreshed and will be rolled out to the service week commencing 2/2/15 ready for the launch of the social work task force.

Ensure that the allocated social worker attends case conferences, looked after children (LAC) reviews and other relevant meetings and provides a report that allows parents and carers and young people sufficient time to see, understand and comment on the report

Work is being undertaken to refine reporting in 'Infoview'. This will enable managers to see conferences where the allocated social worker has not attended, to allow them to investigate the reason for non-attendance. They will also have a list of future conferences to allow managers to plan ahead

Ensure that case records are up to date and accurately reflect decisions made and the reasons for those decisions.

The Continuous Improvement Framework has gone live in January engaging senior and operational managers in the quality assurance process enabling us to get a tighter operational grip with regard to the quality of delivery. Work will continue to ensure audits are systematic and the audit tools that have been developed are used consistently. Additional guidance and support to Independent Reviewing Officers is being undertaken to support the robust challenge of social workers in respect of care planning and case progression. This will be tested out in future case audits.

LAC, permanence and leaving care

Ensure that return interviews for children who go missing from care are conducted by an independent person in accordance with statutory guidance.

Data for the number of offers of Independent Return Interviews and the number accepted has been provided manually by the Children's Rights team. Work is underway to ensure the process for the notification and recording of missing from care episodes on MiCARE, and for offering and recording Independent Review Interviews, is clearly understood and followed by everyone involved. Changes to the recording method on MiCARE will be required to facilitate reporting of this data to the Board and these will be identified and actioned as a priority.

Improving performance information and quality assurance

Strengthen the quality assurance process for reports to the adoption panel and the role of the adoption panel in quality assurance.

Data on the quality of reports to the Adoption Panel has been recorded from January 2015. Presentations by Social Workers will be judged by panel members using the Ofsted judgements. Feedback will be sent to SW's/SSW's and their TM's, alongside the Panel Advisor who will collate the information for the purpose of reporting. This will then be used by Managers within the Supervision sessions with the SW. Where necessary additional support will be afforded to staff to improve their performance. Where there is evidence of continuous poor performance, Managers will take the necessary actions

4. Challenges

Referrals remain high and demand on social workers has not decreased. The MASH is facing some teething problems and a review is under consideration.

5. Action Required

Members of the Improvement Board are requested to note the update of activity associated with the drive to improve the outcomes for the children and young people of Manchester

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