

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE CHILDRENS AND SAFEGUARDING SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT**

*To:* **Children and Young People Committee**

*Meeting Date:* **12<sup>TH</sup> September 2017**

*From:* **Theresa Leavy Interim Director Children and Safeguarding**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **n/a** *Key decision:* **No**

*Purpose:* **The Committee is being advised on the self assessment of performance across Children's Services and the regional challenge exercise undertaken in Summer 2017.**

*Recommendation:* **The committee is asked to note the content of the report, including the areas where services are performing well as well as those where there is a continuing need for improvement.**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This report summarises the arrangements for the self-assessment of the quality of children's services in Cambridgeshire. The report also describes the arrangements for assuring the robustness of the self-assessment through the Eastern Region of the Association of Directors of Children's Services.
- 1.2 A key element of any inspection by OfSTED is an assessment of the extent to which the leaders and managers of children's services understand the quality of the services for which they have responsibility, including their understanding of any areas for continuing development.
- 1.3 Children's services in Cambridgeshire received their last full inspection in June 2014, when within an overall grading of Good, services for children in need of help and protection were graded as Requires Improvement with Ofsted noting that the local authority recognised that there needed to be a continued focus on improvement to ensure that all children were appropriately safeguarded and the remaining variability and inconsistency in the quality of some case work was addressed.
- 1.4 The Joint inspection of services for children with Special Education Needs or Disabilities undertaken in March 2017 stated:

"Senior leaders in the local area are working well together to improve services for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have clear plans in place to address their key priorities for improvement. Consequently, outcomes for the children and young people are improving *and* Leaders' self-evaluation of the local area's strengths and priorities for development is accurate." *Ofsted*
- 1.5 Ofsted are presently reviewing their inspection framework and future inspections of children's services are anticipated to be more varied and responsive.
- 1.6 Appropriately Ofsted and other inspectorates have raised both the bar for inspection outcomes and the focus on key areas (for example, Neglect/Child Sexual Exploitation/Missing/Involvement in gangs etc.) over the past few years
- 1.7 Inspections will be largely unannounced or are announced with minimal notice and it is therefore difficult to predict when an inspection will take place. However, given it is now more than three years since the last full inspection, a further full inspection is likely within the next twelve months.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1 As noted above, self-assessment provides evidence of the extent to which leaders and managers know the services for which they are accountable. This includes knowing about strengths and good practice as well as about areas for development and the extent to which there are plans in place to address these.

2.2 Sell-assessments also help local authorities to be prepared for when they are notified of an inspection. Inspections are either unannounced or announced with minimal notice, meaning that it is helpful to have a regularly revised assessment of local service provision.

2.3 In common with all local authorities in the Eastern Region, Cambridgeshire completes an annual self-assessment using the Association of Directors of Children's Services (DCS) Eastern Region template. The most recent of these self-assessments is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. It is very detailed, but the main findings are summarised later in this report.

2.4 The self-assessments produced by each local authority in the Eastern Region are subject to peer-challenge. This means that Directors of each authority undertake to analyse the quality of the self-assessments of two other authorities and provide a view about the extent to which assessments are evidenced-based.

2.5 Feedback from the DCS challenge was that our self-assessment described accurately our strengths and areas for development as reflected and in line with our national performance indicators. The DCS group felt that there was strength in the level of self awareness depicted across the assessment and would be improved further by incorporating more impact on outcomes data as it becomes available.

2.6 **Summary of Self Assessment**  
The main self-assessment at Appendix 1 contains detailed information about Cambridgeshire its population and demographics.

2.7 The self assessment highlights the level of increase in demand the council have experienced across children's services in the past three to five years. This has led to an increase in the number of children subject to Child Protection planning and the numbers of Looked after Children

2.8 The self-assessment reports that we are able to demonstrate many areas where practice has improved and continues to improve in light of changes within the Children's Change Programme.

2.9 In particular, we can evidence:

- An effective Integrated Front Door incorporating a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Early Help Hub allowing us to access families into the right service in a more effective and timely manner.
- An increasingly effective and accessible Early Help Service offer delivering good outcomes to more families;
- An increase in both social work and clinician capacity within our social work units, which supports the Cambridgeshire model of systemic practice.

- Improved Quality Assurance and increased management oversight in many areas including in respect of children subject to child protection plans;
- Consequently we have seen a decrease in the numbers of children subject to multiple child protection plans.
- Improvements in a range of compliance areas including in relation to the timeliness of completion of assessments and regular visiting of children.
- Our Looked after Children and Care Leavers report good relationships with their social workers and carers.
- We have established a No Wrong Door model of practice to provide young people with complex needs who are experiencing family breakdown, those looked after, and those leaving care with flexible accommodation and support from a single multi-agency service.
- We have a strong participation service and increasingly an effective structure for gathering feedback from all of our customers and using that feedback to shape our services.
- Our Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) service is increasingly focussed on improving the outcomes for our vulnerable groups.
- An improved career structure and workforce development programme for all staff.
- Good retention and recruitment rates in most teams within the children's and safeguarding workforce with very few management vacancies and vacancies across services now generally at or below 10%;
- We have developed an effective monthly dashboard that managers use within a robust performance management structure.

Areas where we have identified a need for some continuing development include:

- Educational outcomes for our vulnerable groups require improvement
- Some areas of service presently have higher caseloads than we would want whilst recruitment is finalised.
- The Health Assessment compliance for our Looked after Children especially those placed out of county continues to require improvement.
- The numbers of children placed out of county and in other than our own foster care is too high.

- The numbers of children who are subject of a child protection investigation but ultimately receive no service has been too high – this is decreasing but requires continuing attention.
- Many of the assessments and much of the care planning undertaken by our staff is good; analytical, outcome focused and well recorded. However the consistency and quality of these activities remains a focus of our attention.
- The consistency and quality of management oversight and supervision, which links to the quality of assessments and care planning is also an on-going area for attention

2.10 • We want more of our Care Leavers to be in good accommodation and to be in work or education.

2.11 Each Workstream within the Local Authority has a detailed service plan within which these and other areas for development are detailed and monitored.

The Children's Performance Board, the LSCB and the Corporate parenting Committee track the delivery of improvements across the service.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

3.1.1 There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### **3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

3.2.1 The extent to which Safeguarding is delivered effectively will have an impact on:

- the capacity of families to meet their own needs independently and
- the long term health of children and young people.

#### **3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

3.3.1 The Report covers the self assessment of the services responsible for the safeguarding of children and young people, and the services we provide for children with SEND and those who are Looked After by the council. It contributes to establishing how far the Council:

- Meets its statutory responsibilities towards safeguarding children.
- Provides an effective service to all children within its area.
- Meets its Corporate Parenting statutory responsibilities towards Looked after Children.

### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Resource Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

**4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

**4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

**4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

**4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

**4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

There are no significant implications within this category.

**4.7 Public Health Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
Children's Self-assessment	Appendix 1