

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND INSPECTION
PREPARATION**

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 3 June 2014

From: Executive Director: Children, Families and Adult Services

Electoral division(s): All

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

Purpose: To inform Children and Young People Committee of the preparation for inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

To inform Children and Young People Committee of the progress of the Improvement Plan following the Ofsted Inspection of Arrangements for the Protection of Children in 2012.

Recommendation: The Children and Young People Committee is asked to agree:

a) To receive regular updates on the progress on actions within the Improvement Plan

b) To note the arrangements for inspection preparation.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In September 2012 Ofsted judged the Council's arrangements for the protection of children in Cambridgeshire as inadequate. However, Ofsted also recognised that improvements were taking place in Children's Social Care as a result of the transformation programme called Social Work - Working for Families (SWWF), which was halfway through its implementation at the time of inspection. The ambition and commitment of Children and Young People Services (CYPS) managers and members to the change programme was commended at the time but inspectors were concerned by a number of issues which resulted in Cambridgeshire receiving an inadequate judgment.
- 1.2 In response to the outcome of the September 2012 inspection, Cambridgeshire's Children's Improvement Board was established to address the Ofsted findings. The Department for Education (DfE) are one of the Improvement Board members who oversee the improvements made in relation to the Improvement Plan. The Plan was initially formulated to address the eight key findings from the inspection, six of which we needed to respond to immediately and two within three months. These were:

Immediately:

1. Review all cases within temporary access team
2. Review all Section 47 enquiries from previous 6 months
3. Ensure strategy meetings are held with relevant professionals
4. Ensure that Child Protection visits are made within statutory time limits
5. Ensure that performance management activity has an impact on practice
6. Ensure staff improve the quality of recording

Within three months:

7. Review the format of child protection plans so it that clearly identifies risk, issues and measurable outcomes
8. Improve the recording of parents' and children and young people's views.

- 1.3 Edward Timpson MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families) signed and formally issued the Improvement Notice to the Council on 7th February 2013. From the date of issue, the Council was given 12 months to achieve all necessary improvements before we could be re-inspected.
- 1.4 The scope of the notice is significantly wider than the recommendations outlined in the Ofsted report. This approach is standard DfE practice, although they have repeatedly stated that Cambridgeshire's Improvement Notice is 'light touch'. As such, this means that Cambridgeshire does not have an independent chair of the Board as is the norm for local authorities who are on a notice to improve. Instead, Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive, chairs the monthly Board meetings, which are attended by Martin Pratt, a peer representative from the London Borough of Camden, Michelle Warne (DfE representative who will be replaced by Kate Lyons from May 2014), the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), the Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services (in his previous capacity) as well as schools, health and police representatives and Children's Services officers.

- 1.5 Two peer reviews of child protection arrangements (May and October 2013) have taken place since the inspection and the DfE completed a six month review in September 2013. In response to these reviews, Councillor Martin Curtis received a letter from Edward Timpson (MP), complimenting Cambridgeshire on the clear signs of positive change and the Council's prompt response to Ofsted's findings. The DfE highlighted that this was not standard practice and felt it was a positive sign that the Council was making good progress.
- 1.6 The period of the Improvement Notice has in effect now lapsed, but until a decision is made to exit Cambridgeshire from intervention (triggered by an Ofsted inspection), the Improvement Notice will stand and Cambridgeshire are expected to continue taking account of it as part of its ongoing improvement work.
- 1.7 The process by which an Improvement Notice is lifted and a Council is exited from intervention and the timings of that have been clarified by the DfE. An exit from intervention is triggered by an Ofsted inspection where a Council is judged overall as 'requires improvement' or better, although a rating of 'requires improvement' does not automatically result in a Council having its Improvement Notice lifted and subsequently exiting intervention.

2. CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 2.1 Following the completion of the initial priorities (as outlined in section 1.4), in February 2013, a comprehensive improvement plan was devised for Children's Services, focused on making sustainable and system wide improvements. Four key themes for improvement were agreed by the Improvement Board:
- Improving Quality
 - Improving Implementation of Learning
 - Improving Tools
 - Improving Strategic Partnerships.
- 2.2 In December 2013, a shortened version of the Children's Safeguarding Improvement Plan was produced, which reflected the 13 priority areas for focus moving forward based on the findings of the Peer Reviews, the DfE six month review and audit programmes. The Plan was updated for the February and May 2014 Improvement Board meetings to show progress against the priority areas.
- 2.3 The Children's Improvement Board is responsible for monitoring progress of the plan and ensuring any risks or issues are managed or resolved. Responsible officers are required to provide scheduled updates to the Children's Improvement Board about the progress of improvement actions, and provide evidence of how these actions are having a positive impact on practice and outcomes for children and families.
- 2.4 A Practitioners' Group has been established to give frontline staff an opportunity to directly influence and inform the improvement work. The Group is chaired by the Service Director: Children's Social Care and is held on a monthly basis in locations across the county, with an open invitation to local Enhanced and Preventative and Social Care staff to attend.

- 2.5 The SWWFF Units are now fully implemented across Cambridgeshire and we are therefore much better placed in terms of our improvement journey for the next inspection. The approach means that instead of working with an individual social worker, families will be supported by the staff in a Social Work Unit. A Social Work Unit is made up of a small group of professionals including a consultant social worker, social workers, a specialist clinician and a unit co-ordinator. All members of the unit share responsibility for the support that is provided to families.
- 2.6 The actions taken to address the eight Ofsted findings have been evaluated to ensure that they have had an impact on practice and addressed the concerns identified by Ofsted.

3. PREPARATION FOR INSPECTION

- 3.1 In April 2013, Ofsted announced a new single inspection framework which brought together the previously separate inspections of safeguarding, child protection, children in care and local authority adoption and fostering arrangements.
- 3.2 In addition to scrutinising the full scope of Children's Social Care, the single inspection framework includes local authority 'early help' services and the contributions of all partner agencies to safeguarding and support for vulnerable children at all levels. For the first time, this partnership focus also includes a specific inspection judgement of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- 3.3 The Improvement Board and the Improvement Plan are the primary mechanisms through which the quality of local arrangements has been strengthened. The two independent peer reviews and programmes of internal and external auditing have provided strong challenge and valuable experience for teams in managing external scrutiny and have provided evidence to identify areas for development (and strengths).
- 3.4 In addition to the work of the Improvement Board, an Inspection Readiness Group has met monthly and is comprised of leads from all children's directorates. The group has undertaken a self-assessment against the specified Ofsted grade criteria within the new framework to identify areas where work was required to ensure that evidence is available to demonstrate that the Council is meeting the stated expectations. This work has further informed the basis of an action plan to build our evidence base.
- 3.5 An evidence store has been created to bring together key documents from teams across Children, Families and Adults (CFA) Services to allow inspectors to understand our arrangements and see the impact we are having on children and families.
- 3.6 Annex A of the Ofsted guidance details a very specific and extensive set of data lists which the inspection team will expect the local authority to produce once the inspection begins. We have been working to ensure that this information is available, is continually updated and quality assured alongside our own management information processes.

- 3.7 Detailed case tracking and evaluation will be central to the inspection. Inspectors will ask the Local Authority to audit 18 cases and to provide the inspection team with a full report of the outcome of the audits. Further cases over and above these initial 18 will be identified later in the inspection process. The implementation of the revised case audit framework and the experience of auditing cases for the peer reviews have provided good experience for this aspect of the inspection.
- 3.8 Although the next inspection is unannounced, we have received the planned start dates of the inspection blocks from Ofsted. These are for the first year of the three-year programme and are subject to change. The dates that Local Authorities will be notified on the day before the inspectors arrive on site as follows: 20 May 2014, 3 June 2014, 24 June 2014, 1 July 2014, 9 September 2014 and 30 September 2014. The inspection will take place over a four-week period. Week three is the most intense period with the full inspection team on site for the whole week.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

- 4.1.1 There are no significant implications for this priority.

4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

- 4.2.1 The previous inspection noted the strength of “early help” services in providing a range of tailored support to families to enable them to live healthy and independent lives, without requiring statutory interventions to protect children. This has also been evident in our subsequent audits.

4.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

- 4.3.1 The previous inspection covered the Council’s arrangements for the protection of children and has identified weaknesses in these arrangements. The actions in the improvement plan have strengthened the support and protection and the protection that the Council provides to vulnerable children and young people and this remains ongoing in our improvement journey.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

- 5.1.1 It is envisaged that the improvement plan can be delivered through current resources. The improvement actions will result in improved performance in the longer term. However, the pressure on children’s social care in terms of demand is increasing month of month. Actions are in place to manage the demand alongside the ongoing commitment to improvement.

5.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 The improvement plan actions will result in the Council being better placed to deliver its statutory requirements with regard to protecting children. It will also reduce further the risk to children, particularly through reducing the variability of practice and recording.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1 The improvement plan covers all functions across Children's Services, including services to disabled children.

5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

- 5.4.1 The inspection did include seeking the views of parents, carers and children in receipt of services. The Executive Director wrote to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and the Children's Trust partners, as well as to all schools communicating the outcomes of the inspection, and inviting engagement in the improvement work. Representatives from the police, schools, LSCB and Public Health are members of the Improvement Board.
- 5.4.2 Participation and feedback from families is one of the key improvement priorities within the current improvement plan and a number of areas have been developed as a result; the CFA Participation Strategy and Voice of the Child and Family Strategy to formalise the importance, training, changes to social care practice standards, case recording guidance, introduction of new resources (iPads) and working groups.
- 5.4.3 An example of this feedback is 90% of parents responding to a survey about parental involvement in Child Protection conferences said they were listened to and were able to say what they wanted to say.

5.5 Public Health Implications

- 5.5.1 None.

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

- 5.6.1 No specific implications.

Source Documents	Location
All Ofsted reports outlined in Section 1 can be found on the Ofsted website which include: Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children – September 2012	http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/cambridgeshire .
Social Work - Working for Families	http://camweb/cfa/csoccare/workingforfamilies/
Ofsted - Single Assessment Framework Guidance	http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-and-evaluation-schedule-for-inspection-of-services-for-children-need-of-help-and-protectio