

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 11th February 2015

Subject: Transforming Children's Social Work in Leeds – Progress and Further Developments



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. In line with our ongoing commitment to keep Executive Board informed of key developments in Children's Services, this report provides an update on progress in services for children, young people and families in Leeds with a particular focus on the ongoing transformation of children's social work services. It highlights Leeds' success in being awarded £4.85 million from the Department for Education's (DfE) Innovation Fund and the work taking place as a result of this. It also outlines further improvements planned across the service that will sit alongside the innovation fund to create system-change throughout the city.
2. This is an important point in time for Children's Services in Leeds. The ambition to become a child friendly city is becoming increasingly recognised and embedded, both within Leeds and amongst a wider national and international audience. This will be underpinned by an updated Children and Young People's Plan, to be launched shortly, which will reaffirm a multi-agency commitment to our shared vision, approach, outcomes and priorities.
3. An Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; and the effectiveness of partnership working, including the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board, is taking place at the time of writing this report. It will conclude on Wednesday 11th February. Though the report will not be published for some time, it will provide a valuable additional contribution to informing our further development of the service. Wider transformation is required and underway

to respond to the changing levels and distribution of government funding for local services.

4. Within this context the innovation fund award is particularly timely. It will enable Leeds to build on progress made in recent years and create a 'step-change' in implementing different ways of working with vulnerable families. The fund is being used to: strengthen early intervention and quality of practice by rolling out restorative practice training to more than 6000 multi-agency colleagues; significantly expand the use of family group conferencing to facilitate better outcomes and experiences for many more vulnerable children and families; and commission services that complement a restorative approach by working with families in ways that give their members the strength to change their own behaviours. The speed and scale of implementation needed will be a challenge and require cross-council and multi-agency support, but the potential impact for the city could be genuinely transformational.
5. Alongside this, a continuing programme of improvement and progress across safeguarding, specialist and targeted services in the city aims to embed and enhance a more flexible, effective and customer-focused system that puts the child at the heart of all the work that affects them. Through the ongoing development of Leeds' nationally leading Families First project; the creation of more accessible and co-ordinated 'front door' and emergency duty services; improved quality across the homes and facilities that house vulnerable children and young people in Leeds; tailored changes to services for particular vulnerable groups; and an ongoing programme of workforce training and development, Leeds will create a children's social work service that reflects the scale of ambition for our children and young people.
6. It is timely to update Executive Board on this work and seek support for the continuing progress of the service transformation.

Recommendations

7. Executive Board is recommended to:
 - (i) Note the success of Leeds Innovation Fund bid and support the activity as a result of the fund that will signal a step-change in the use of restorative approaches for working with vulnerable families in Leeds
 - (ii) Endorse the wider work planned to develop children's social work in Leeds as part of our ambitions to make Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in, noting in particular the proposals to enhance the role of the corporate carers group.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 In line with our ongoing commitment to keep Executive Board informed of key developments in Children's Services, this report provides an update on progress in services for children, young people and families in Leeds with a particular focus on the ongoing transformation of children's social work services. It highlights Leeds' success in being awarded £4.85 million from the Department for Education's (DfE) Innovation Fund and the work taking place as a result of this. It also outlines further improvements planned across the service that will sit alongside the innovation fund to create system-change throughout the city.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Children's Social Work Service in Leeds has been on a journey of incremental improvement over a number of years. Through the ambition to make Leeds a child friendly city and with the multi-agency support of the Children and Families Trust Board and the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board, the service began a fundamental transformation of its work with vulnerable children, young people and families. A re-organisation of the service; stronger focus on 'doing the simple things better' and having timely, quality conversations; investment in workforce training and development; and crucially a focus on incremental change built on a strong, objective evidence base – have all contributed to a more confident, secure and forward-thinking service.
- 2.2 In recent years the Leeds approach to work with vulnerable families has become more defined, with a clear rationale behind it. This approach is twofold: firstly, emphasising the value of behaving restoratively throughout our work. Working restoratively means doing things *with* families rather than for them or to them because it gives families greater ownership of decisions that affect them and fosters the strength to change. Secondly, focusing on the continued importance of 'family' as the most important influence on a child's safety and well-being and as such the most significant utility in the social and economic regeneration of the city.
- 2.3 This restorative, family-focused approach has increasingly guided Children's Social Work practice and decision-making across Leeds. Rather than looking immediately to the child protection system when there are concerns about a child, practitioners, both in social work and other services are increasingly looking for safe, appropriate, alternative family-centred solutions to meet the child's needs. A restorative practice leadership and training programme for the Children's Social Work workforce has given practitioners the skills and confidence to hold the difficult conversations that can unlock the deeper cause of difficulties within families and the wider range of solutions that may be available. The council's investment in expanding the family group conferencing service from a small team to a city-wide initiative has created the means by which alternatives to state care, utilising the involvement and support of wider family and friend networks, can increasingly be explored and facilitated.
- 2.4 These developments have seen a number of positive outcomes for families and the city. More than 100 children and young people who would previously have

been placed into care have been supported to stay safely and appropriately with their wider family. Quality of practice, decision-making and recording is improving and significant financial savings have been achieved for the city – the £1 million investment in family group conferencing has produced approximately £4 million in savings and the significant overall reduction in the number of looked after children in Leeds (down by 123, or 8.6%) since the launch of the Children and Young People’s plan, has contributed to further additional savings on top of this.

2.5 Alongside this focus on reducing the need for children and young people to be taken into care, Leeds has also worked to improve support for arrangements where the wider family do step-in and take on a role in the child’s care. These family and friends (kinship) care arrangements become increasingly important as our restorative approach and family group conferencing model becomes more embedded. We are proactively looking to enhance support for this group, many of whom are grandparents, by creating a stronger package of assistance to them and working with national organisations to raise the profile of this work within government and beyond. Leeds has published a clear ‘Family and Friends Care’ policy outlining the support available, we are working on developing a number of measures, such as free legal and financial advice to carers. We have developed partnerships with businesses to give these carers more help and incentives and our Director of Children’s Services Chairs the national cross-Government working group on Family and Friends Care that is making recommendations to Ministers about how to take this work forward.

2.6 Together, these strands of work have demonstrated the potential to provide a different type of social work service, one that keeps children safe by orientation towards ‘family support’ rather than the prevailing English orientation towards ‘child protection’. The opportunity now offered by the innovation fund is to expand and embed this model in Leeds to bring about lasting, wholesale system change that both improves outcomes for families and also offers potentially significant savings for the state.

3 Main issues

Family Valued: The Leeds Innovation Fund Proposal

3.1 Leeds has been awarded £4.85m of the innovation fund to embed wide-scale culture and practice change, creating a more family support oriented model, by enabling practitioners to use restorative techniques that work *with* children, young people to safely and appropriately find their own solutions to the difficulties they face *before* the need for more significant social care intervention. With the fund, our aim is that across the city we can realise the following entitlement for children, young people and families in Leeds:

- *The default behaviour of children’s services in all its dealings with local citizens/partners and organisations will be restorative - high support with high challenge*
- *Children’s Services in Leeds will ensure that families, whose children might otherwise be removed from their homes, are supported to meet and develop an alternative plan before such action is taken*

- *In all other cases where there are concerns about the safeguarding or welfare of a child or children, we will work safely and appropriately with the family to support them in helping to decide what needs to happen*

- 3.2 To make this possible we must work right across the people and organisations in our children's workforce to implement a common language and approach that creates a more consistent, higher quality experience for the citizens of Leeds. Implementing restorative practices across the city will make that possible and our ambition is to train more than six thousand staff to an appropriate level in these techniques and ensure they are used daily throughout work with children, young people and families to address issues earlier in the life of the problem.
- 3.3 At the forefront of this restorative programme will be an expansion of family group conferencing (FGC) FGC's into areas where there is significant potential to change outcomes and referral patterns. Current capacity enables the service to carry out approximately 550 conferences a year, which are primarily focused on children in Leeds facing a child protection conference and families subject to a pre-birth assessment. With the innovation fund we will double this capacity and expand Family Group Conferences into more areas of practice where we believe they can make a positive difference. In particular, where appropriate to do so we will use family group conferences to address incidents of domestic violence, creating an environment for perpetrators to acknowledge their behaviour and for a package of help that supports victims and children and reduces the likelihood of reoffending to be put in place. This in turn will support the city-wide breakthrough project on reducing domestic violence. We will draw on national and international expertise to design this service and work closely with service users.
- 3.4 As we make these changes we will make sure we offer and commission the right services to meet the needs emerging from restorative, family-centred approaches, ensuring the right support is in place so that when the extended family and friends do take on more responsibility they do not do it alone. The fund includes £800,000 to put this additional capacity in place.
- 3.5 The Leeds Innovation Fund Proposal is bold and ambitious. It will require a concerted effort, flexibility in processes (such as recruitment) and commitment across our partnership to maximise its potential. A programme office and governance arrangements are being put in place and this will include regular reports to the Children and Families Trust Board and a timely update to Executive Board. Evaluation is a key part of the innovation fund model and the Department for Education allocate Leeds an evaluation partner to work alongside us to test the learning from implementation. A 'coach' allocated by the Department will also work with Leeds to support and monitor progress and report regularly to the DfE.

Wider Developments in Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services

- 3.6 The innovation fund work on embedding a restorative approach throughout our work with vulnerable families is part of a wider plan to be the best city for children and young people to grow up in. Several areas of work reported previously to Executive Board are continuing and will also support these ambitions. These include:

Families First

- 3.7 Strong progress continues to be made on the Families First (troubled families) programme, for which Leeds is recognised as being a nationally leading authority. We anticipate that by May 2015 Leeds will be able to report that all 2190 (100%) of the families that we have worked with through the first phase have achieved 'turn around' and as a result of this success, Leeds has been chosen as an early adopter for phase 2, working with a further 1000 families.

Support Children with Complex Needs

- 3.8 A previous report to Executive Board outlined the changes needed in services for children and young people with complex needs in response to the Children and Families Act. Implementation of these changes is becoming more embedded with the use of education, health and care plans replacing the previous statement of special needs and the increasing use of personalised budgets to provide tailored support for vulnerable children. The Leeds local offer online tool is in place to provide families with information about the support available in their local area.
- 3.9 A key area for development is further investment into the three Children's Health and Disability (CHAD) teams to continue strengthening quality of practice, particularly where there are both child protection and disability issues for the child. This will include supplementing the Advanced Practitioner role, training in specialist assessment skills, quality assurance and managerial oversight and reflective supervisory practices.

Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre and Pupil Referral Unit Provision

- 3.10 Priority also continues to be given to the work to improve provision for pupils at the city's pupil referral units and those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. In line with the report to Executive Board in December 2013 The vision is to provide smaller centres under one governance and leadership. These centres will be responsive to the continuum of needs of learners with social, emotional and mental health rather than specifically around key stages. This will ensure the flexibility and scope to offer personalised programmes, including therapeutic interventions. This structural solution will meet the changing and evolving needs of this cohort of young people whilst offering consistency in provision.
- 3.11 Progress is ongoing to move this work forward. The local authority is working with the DFE and partners to form an academy Trust through which to sponsor the provision. There are local headteachers, Leeds City College, and academy sponsors who are interested in coming together to form such a trust. The proposal is for the existing BESD SILC to close in August 2016, with new provision being commissioned to open in September 2016. An academy sponsor will be sought and it is anticipated that the new Leeds Trust will have been approved and able to bid to run the new academy. Discussions are being held with private providers to secure additional places in the short to medium term to facilitate this speedy resolution. Alongside this an appropriate site for the new provision is being sought.

Progress across Children's Social Work Services

- 3.12 In addition important developments are taking place to continue making improvements for looked after children in Leeds and children's social work practitioners, these include:

Frameworki:

- 3.13 The use of Frameworki is now much more embedded across the workforce having been implemented and rolled out to 1400 users in November 2013. The user base has since grown to over 2000. The implementation represented a significant business change for the service and users have been supported throughout the embedding of the system. Practitioners can now see the full journey of the child in one place and this supports effective decision making.
- 3.14 Within the next 12 months and as was always the intention, a business case will be developed to upgrade Frameworki to Mosaic. This upgrade will again involve business change and the timing will be determined by business readiness and the broader improvement journey of the service. Mosaic will provide additional functionality to help practitioners and further support the safeguarding of children and young people. The business case will also incorporate plans to further develop our reporting capability to ensure that practitioners and managers have ready access to a greater range of information at any point in time. More details will be provided for Executive Board at an appropriate point in the future.

Ongoing Workforce Training and Development

- 3.15 Social workers in Leeds have benefited from an enhanced programme of training and support in recent years. Leading academics have worked directly with teams to introduce research and practice that informs their approach, a wider training package is in place including a restorative leadership programme and restorative practice training for all social workers. This will be further enhanced by the training strand of the innovation fund. An annual social worker's conference draws on national and international best practice and creates a focal point for learning throughout the year.
- 3.16 In February a scheduled series of academic lectures for Leeds social workers will begin the further spread of best practice and encourage ideas, debate and a learning culture across the service. A number of specific training programmes are being introduced to address key areas: building on the investment made already this will include reflective supervision, with a particular focus on how to develop the quality of practice and recording, and care planning training. A focus will be placed on helping practitioners understand issues around 'neglect' and 'safeguarding children with disabilities' with specific attention being given to assessment skills around this group. Tailored leadership training for the managers of residential homes is also in development to address the specific issues and opportunities for this cohort.

More flexible, integrated services

- 3.17 The improvements made to the duty and advice 'front door' services in Leeds have been a key factor- in underpinning better outcomes for vulnerable children and families. The service has already benefitted from bringing social work, police and health colleagues together to ensure a more integrated response to referrals. In the coming months we plan to develop that model further. A move to the fourth floor at West Gate for the 'front door' service will enable the expansion of this model. Third sector and adult social care colleagues, alongside specialists in domestic violence, will add to the existing complement of duty and advice colleagues to provide an even more holistic and responsive service able to refer families to a wider range of appropriate services.
- 3.18 We recognise that many requests for support from social care are not made during conventional 'office hours'. Our aspiration therefore is to provide an emergency duty team supported and equipped to handle referrals quickly and effectively, whenever they are made. Whilst we are confident that children and young people are kept safe by our existing out of hour's service, following feedback from families and partners and in view of data that indicates that there is often a peak in referrals during the early evening time, we are in the early stages of exploring how resource can be allocated more closely to reflect this.

Better Quality Settings

- 3.19 The quality of the facilities that home vulnerable children and young people is an important factor in creating the right environment for learning and development. Likewise the environment that practitioners work in has an impact on the morale and approach they take. Leeds is enhancing quality in key settings:
- 3.20 The new Adel Beck facility has now opened. It replaces East Moor Secure Children's Home. Adel Beck has state of the art technology for both security and teaching and learning and is designed to provide young people with a living and learning environment that is safe, secure and encourages and inspires positive change. Adel Beck's new Programmes and Development Team will provide Care and Interventions programmes based on the individual needs of children and young people.
- 3.21 Work is continuing to rationalise and improve the children's home estate across the city. Leeds' strategy to create an estate of more suitable and tailored smaller homes is progressing, in 2014 Leeds two biggest children's homes (Inglewood and Wood Lane) were closed and are being replaced with new homes that will be opened during February 2015. We are also consulting on the closure of Bodmin Road. The remit of all homes is being reviewed to bring them into line with the wider remit and approach of the children's social work service, for example two homes will be tailored to older children in care to support them to make a smoother transition into adulthood, another home is being linked more closely to the foster care team to prevent repeat foster care breakdowns, a further team will be linked with the multi-systemic therapy team. In this way our provision can be tailored more specifically to children and young people's unique needs. The management structure of the homes is being reviewed with a view to putting

social work managers in place across the estate. The views of young people are being sought throughout this improvement process.

- 3.22 For practitioners themselves there have been several important office moves in recent months that provide much more modern and suitable facilities and are enabling teams to work more closely together. All teams have now been moved out of the Roundhay Road accommodation and relocated. A number of teams that were previously dispersed – fostering, adoption and the looked after children team - have been brought together at Kernel House. This is a model that we are looking to replicate across the city. The Children’s Social Work leadership team has been relocated from Merrion House to St Georges House and sits alongside the wider Children’s Services Leadership Team.

Educational attainment of looked after children

- 3.23 The ‘virtual school’ for looked after children plays a key role within our overall offer of support to vulnerable children and young people. To continue our progress on improving outcomes in this area, we have put in place a plan to grow and strengthen this part of the service so that children in care receive more individual support and are more closely monitored throughout their education. Further review and investment in this area will ensure that statutory obligations around the support for this cohort are met.

Support for care leavers

- 3.24 Leeds has recognised that support for young people leaving care and moving into adulthood is a priority for the service. With input from leading expert Professor Emily Munro, a significant amount of work has been done over the past year to enhance this and plans to build on this progress are ongoing. The entire service structure has been reviewed and improved with a particular emphasis on creating a more multi-agency response to supporting care leavers that includes health, housing, welfare rights and transitions, with significant progress in this area. We are now placing a renewed focus on education, training and employment and are seeking to achieve the ‘care to work’ charter mark. This will be complemented by a review of pathway planning. Young people who are or have been in care will become more involved in the service itself. We are looking to recruit two young people with this experience to become part of the team and have a direct input into the future offer. A care leaver conference is being planned for October 2015 to take place during care leaver week (21st – 28th October).

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Hub

- 3.25 Under the oversight of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board, Children’s Social Work Services and West Yorkshire Police have been working together for some time to strengthen the service and response around child exploitation, more recently taking into account the significant implications from events in Rotherham. The cost and resource for supporting young people at risk of CSE has been reviewed and as a result work is now taking place to establish a multi-agency CSE hub for Leeds that will include social workers, the police, health, youth justice workers and the third sector. Alongside this, additional provision for young people at high risk of CSE will be identified within Leeds existing residential provision and

an enhanced arrangement for oversight and monitoring of CSE cases is being implemented. Leeds is working with partners across the region and beyond to progress a co-ordinated response to the full range of issues that accompany CSE concerns.

A stronger corporate parenting model

3.26 All of the developments outlined in this report require the leadership and support of elected members. The corporate parenting role continues to be crucial and the corporate carers group are at the forefront of this work. In December 2014 a report to the Corporate Leadership Team proposed a number of changes to strengthen the role of corporate carers, drawing on national best practice. CLT approved all of these proposals, which were subsequently endorsed by Corporate Carers at their January meeting. They include:

- (i) Corporate Carers Group be renamed as 'Corporate Parenting Board'
- (ii) Meetings to be structured around the Care Promise
- (iii) Agree a clear strategy and priorities for improvement, with an annual report
- (iv) The content of meetings be restructured to strengthen the role and impact, this will include inviting senior officers, including the Chief Executive of the Council, Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board and Chair of the Health and Well-being Board to attend meetings on a timetabled basis through the year to outline their role in supporting children in care.
- (v) Themed meetings that invite wider key partners to account for their role in improving outcomes for children in care.

3.27 These changes will come into effect at the next Corporate Carers meeting and the Chief Executive of the Council has requested to attend to support this work. Together they will give corporate parenting a greater profile and impact.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 As reported previously to Executive Board, a city-wide consultation on the new Children and Young People's Plan for Leeds has recently been completed. This has endorsed the continuation of the overarching strategy for children's services in Leeds. In developing the details of the work strands within the innovation fund and the wider service changes the voices and views of service users will be integral to the process.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 There are no implications under this heading.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Leeds has made a city-wide commitment to becoming a child friendly city. Our aspiration within this is to provide the best quality services to vulnerable children and young people. In recent years clear progress has been seen in the approach to children's social work services, creating more restorative, family focused and

evidence-based practice and culture. The innovation fund and the wider developments outlined in this report will enable an acceleration of this progress and a potential step-change in the breadth and impact of our approach.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The Leeds Innovation Fund bid combines £3.71 million of existing spending plans with £4.85 million of additional DfE investment to create a total investment of £8.56 million. The details of this are outlined in the table below:

Leeds Innovation Bid - Programme Budget Summary

	2014/15			2015/16			TOTAL		
	Leeds	DfE	Total	Leeds	DfE	Total	Leeds	DfE	Total
Set Up Costs	0	60	60	0	130	130	0	190	190
Workforce Development Costs	50	60	110	153	1,263	1,415	203	1,323	1,525
Family Group Conferencing Costs	179	25	204	1,210	1,545	2,755	1,389	1,570	2,959
Targeted & Specialist Service Costs	303	0	303	1,819	800	2,619	2,122	800	2,922
Programme Team Costs	0	46	46	0	275	275	0	321	321
Scaling Costs	0	0	0	0	245	245	0	245	245
Evaluation Costs	0	0	0	0	400	400	0	400	400
TOTAL COSTS	532	191	723	3,182	4,658	7,839	3,714	4,848	8,562

4.4.2 The wider use of FGCs in Leeds has already contributed to a significant reduction in looked after children numbers. An investment of approximately £1m in our FGC service has yielded estimated savings of £4m. Conservative projections detailed in the bid indicate that further expansion leading to ongoing reductions in looked after children numbers could return savings of almost £7m per year as the model becomes embedded. In addition there are potential financial benefits to wider partners if the expansion of family group conferencing into wider areas leads to a reduction in, for example incidents of domestic abuse, or re-offending when young people leave secure accommodation.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no implications under this heading.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The innovation fund has been awarded to Leeds on the basis that it will be spent between February 2015 and March 2016. The Leeds proposal is ambitious and wide-ranging in terms of the number of organisations involved and the pace at which the programme needs to be implemented. A clear programme plan is in place, with a programme manager being recruited and governance arrangements developed to oversee the work. A risk-assessment was produced as part of the bidding process. It is essential therefore that the programme receives support from multi-agency partners and across the council to meet the challenging deadlines and realise the scale and potential of the innovation.

5 Conclusions

5.1 This report has provided Executive Board with an update on a number of important developments for Children's Services in Leeds. This is a key point in time: the successful innovation fund bid, the launch of a new Children and Young People's Plan and the reorganisation of the service in the context of the changing financial landscape, all offer opportunities to continue progressing our child friendly city ambitions. Alongside this, the next stage of developments across safeguarding, specialist and targeted services will enhance the support to the most vulnerable children, young people and families in Leeds. Implementing these changes requires an ongoing city-wide effort and it is critical therefore that the prioritisation of children's services improvement across our partnerships continues.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Executive Board is recommended to:

- (i) Note the success of Leeds Innovation Fund bid and support the activity as a result of the fund that will signal a step-change in the use of restorative approaches for working with vulnerable families in Leeds
- (ii) Endorse the wider work planned to develop children's social work in Leeds as part of our ambitions to make Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in, noting in particular the proposals to enhance the role of the corporate carers group.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None applicable

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.