



**Report of the: Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement)**

**To: Executive Board**

**Date: 10 March 2010**

**Subject: Children's Services Improvement Arrangements**

**Electoral wards affected:**

All

**Specific implications for:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the gap

Eligible for Call In

Not eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

## 1.0 Purpose of this Report

1.1. At their meeting on 6 January 2010, Members of Executive Board received a report outlining proposals to establish an independently chaired Improvement Board to oversee the implementation of the Council's improvement plan for children's services.

1.2. This report provides an update for Members with a particular focus on:

- i) Formal endorsement of the Board's membership and proposed terms of reference.
- ii) An update on the Improvement Notice to be issued by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).
- iii) Formal agreement of the Council's Improvement Plan for Children's Services.

## 2.0 The Improvement Board

2.1. A proposal to establish the Improvement Board was formally proposed to Dawn Primarolo MP, Minister of State for Children Young People and Families, in a letter from the Leaders of Council dated 4 December 2009, and was formally announced as an agreed proposal shortly afterwards.

2.2. At the same time, it was announced that the Board will be led by an independent chair and it was confirmed that Bill McCarthy, Chief Executive of NHS Yorkshire and the Humber, had kindly agreed to fulfil this role. The final membership of the Board

has now been agreed and can be confirmed as consisting of the following representatives:

- i) Cllr Golton, Lead Member for Children's Services.
- ii) Paul Rogerson, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council.
- iii) Chief Superintendent Gerry Broadbent, Leeds North East Divisional Commander, West Yorkshire Police.
- iv) Peter Roberts, Chief Executive of Leeds City College.
- v) John Lawlor, Chief Executive of NHS Leeds.
- vi) Penny Thompson, external challenge and support.

- 2.3. The Board will also be attended by key officers of the Council, including the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement), who will be the key corporate officer supporting the Chair, and the Director of Children's Services. Other senior colleagues from children's services and Education Leeds will also report into the Board as required.
- 2.4. We have also extended an invite for a GOYH representative, as well as a member of the DCSF Intervention team, to also attend the Improvement Board in an observer capacity.
- 2.5. The Board met for the first time on the 19 January 2010 and for a second time on 22 February 2010. At these meetings the Board discussed its proposed terms of reference and the proposed final version is now attached at appendix 1 to this report.

### **3.0 Improvement Notice**

- 3.1. In the January 2010 report to Executive Board, Members were informed that the Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families had indicated that she was minded to issue a formal Improvement Notice which would establish the targets and milestones the Minister expects to see delivered over the coming months. Improvement Notices are not legal instruments, but are formal notices designed to address under performance in a local authority.
- 3.2. A draft of Leeds' Improvement Notice was received shortly after the January 2010 Executive Board meeting and officers have been in discussion with the DCSF over recent weeks to secure agreement on the final terms of the Notice. The draft was also reported to the Improvement Board at both its January and February meetings and the Board's comments are being taken into account in agreeing the final draft.
- 3.3. We expect to receive the final notice prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and will, therefore, circulate copies to members of Executive Board as soon as it arrives with us.
- 3.4. It is expected that the Improvement Notice will set out a clear agenda for improvement in the areas of safeguarding children, improving attainment, delivering the National Challenge Programme and making overall improvements in LAA indicators relating to children's services and statutory attainment targets.
- 3.5. The duration of the Improvement Notice is expected to last until October 2011, although it can be lifted at an earlier date at the discretion of the Secretary of State if the necessary improvements have been made and are sustainable.

## **4.0 The Improvement Plan**

- 4.1. The terms of reference for the Improvement Board, as well as the Improvement Notice, require the preparation of an Improvement Plan which identifies the key actions being progressed to ensure improvement is secured and that milestones set within the Improvement Notice are met.
- 4.2. The Improvement Plan has five high level themes as follows:
- i) Effective leadership and governance of integrated children's services in Leeds;
  - ii) Excellent safeguarding standards and practice;
  - iii) Improved outcomes for looked after children;
  - iv) All young people participating fully, socially and economically;
  - v) A highly skilled, well supported, motivated and continually developing workforce;
  - vi) Within each theme are a number of outcomes, for which lead accountability has been identified.
- 4.3. All of the actions within the Improvement Plan arise from key sources (e.g. the Improvement Notice, the Announced and Unannounced Inspection reports, the Annual CAA Children's Assessment) and, therefore, represent the key performance issues that need to be addressed over the course of the next 12-18 months.
- 4.4. The latest version of the Improvement Plan is attached at appendix 2. The plan will need to be considered further once the final Improvement Notice has been received and the Children's Service review outcomes have been agreed. Executive Board will receive regular updates on progress against the plan.
- 4.5. A monitoring process and framework has also been developed and is outlined in the relevant section of the Improvement Plan.

## **5.0 Recommendations**

- 5.1. Members of Executive Board are recommended to:
- i) Endorse the Terms of Reference for the Improvement Board, and;
  - ii) Approve the Improvement Plan.

### **Background Documents:**

- Report to Executive Board dated 6 January 2010