



## Report of the Director of Children's Services

### Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

29<sup>th</sup> July 2010

### Update on the process for ensuring improvement in Children's Services in Leeds

#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

## Executive Summary

- 1.0 At its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010, the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee received a report on the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Services in Leeds. The Committee was informed that, whilst the inspection had noted some important recent improvement, there remained key areas of concern requiring significant focus. The Committee was also informed about the wider context for service improvement in Leeds, specifically the improvement notice served by central government.
- 2.0 The Committee learnt that in addition to a variety of specific actions within and across services to address recommendations from the inspection, a number of other initiatives were also in place to provide a framework for continuous improvement. In particular the report drew attention to:
  - The establishment of an externally Chaired Improvement Board
  - The development of an overarching Improvement Plan for Children's Service
  - The review of children's services, reported to Executive Board
- 3.0 In line with a request from the Committee, this report provides an update on how this process to monitor and support improvement is progressing. It discusses how the Improvement Plan is being used as a monitoring tool, how the Improvement Board (and other key groups) are operating and how this work is being tied in with the progress of the transformation programme in children's services.
- 4.0 Whilst Leeds has not received a further external inspection to monitor progress to date, the Improvement Plan, Board and related groups are complying with the role and responsibilities originally envisaged for them.

## **1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

1.1 This report provides members with an update on the work that has been done during 2010 to monitor and support service improvement in children's services in Leeds. Specifically it discusses how the improvement plan and the externally chaired Improvement Board have been used to drive this work. It also provides a brief overview of the transformation programme developed to implement wider change across children and young people's service. In providing this information the report responds to a request made by Committee members at their March 2010 meeting.

## **2.0 Background Information**

2.1 At its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010, the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee received a report on the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Services in Leeds. The Committee was informed that, whilst the inspection had noted some important recent improvement, there remained key areas of concern requiring significant focus. The Committee was also informed about the wider context for service improvement in Leeds, specifically the improvement notice served by central government.

2.2 The Committee learnt that in addition to a variety of specific actions within and across services to address recommendations from the inspection, a number of other initiatives were also in place to provide a framework for continuous improvement. In particular the report drew attention to:

- The establishment of an externally Chaired Improvement Board
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2.3 The report appended background information that included the terms of reference for the Improvement Board and a table summarising the various officer and political groups involved in monitoring the Improvement Plan. As a form of quick reference, that table is appended again to this report (appendix 1), with an additional comment box added that updates members on whether the groups have been carrying out the role originally envisaged for them. The remainder of this report contains more detail about the work to deliver improvements across children's services.

## **3.0 Main Issues**

3.1 The processes now in place to monitor and support service improvement are providing more clarity, focus, challenge and collective ownership in relation to the children and young people's agenda. The Board has recognised that progress is being made on implementing actions and this is being seen in improvement across a number of performance measures.

### The Improvement Plan

3.2 The Improvement Plan was developed as the primary tool for monitoring specific progress and actions highlighted by the Children and Young People's Plan, Ofsted inspections and ratings and the government's improvement notice. The Plan has been valuable in bringing together, in one document, the wide variety of activity needed to deliver better services and enabling a reference point to check progress. However, the breadth of the Plan is such that it has not been feasible for the

Improvement Board (or other bodies) to consider it in full at each of its meetings. As such the Board quickly agreed a process whereby they would focus on specific themes from within the Plan at each of their meetings, whilst also continuing to receive a more detailed monitoring report each month providing an overview across all areas. The monitoring report covers:

- Summary of current strategic position.
- Reminder of top six areas of focus (as identified by the Improvement Board).
- Updated position on top six areas of focus.
- Updated risks and mitigating actions.
- Detailed monitoring update.

3.3 At its May meeting, in line with the requirements set out in the government's improvement notice, the Improvement Board complemented the monitoring report with a specific stock-take against the issues raised in the improvement notice based on the 2009/10 end of year (quarter four) performance data. This helped to identify the areas where targets set by central government were on track and those where faster improvement is needed. This in turn informed the Board's work plan for future meetings.

3.4 This suite of documents – the Improvement Plan monitoring report, the stock take specifically against the improvement notice and the themed, more detailed reports on key areas of work – have sought to give the Improvement Board a comprehensive range of information. They aim to combine a broad overview, with attention to detail where it is needed and most importantly, an accurate appraisal of areas that continue to present concerns in terms of performance and ultimately therefore, outcomes for children and young people.

3.5 However, the Board and officers supporting it are acutely aware of the importance of getting the maximum benefit from the Improvement Plan and maintaining its relevance to the wider context of developments in Children's Services. The fluency of the Plan is critical given the current pace of change, particularly in view of the transformation programme in children's services (discussed below) the rapidly changing situation around levels of resource and the impact that is being made at the front line. It was therefore proposed to the Board at their June meeting that the Improvement Plan be refreshed to ensure its structure and content continue providing the appropriate framework to continue delivering the required improvements. The refreshed Plan will be submitted to a future Improvement Board for approval.

#### The Improvement Board and Related Monitoring Groups

3.6 Since March, the Improvement Board has been the principal forum for consideration and monitoring of the Improvement Plan and wider issues relating to delivering improvement in Children's Services. The Board is independently chaired and has representation from key partner organizations across the city. A list of the Board's membership is attached at appendix 2.

3.7 The Board has met monthly throughout 2010. In addition to the reporting arrangements for the Improvement Plan already discussed above, the Board requests information on specific areas or themes considered high priorities. To date these themes have included:

- Effective leadership and Governance

- A skilled and motivated workforce
- Safeguarding

- 3.8 This is a valuable opportunity for Leeds, as it provides insight and challenge around these areas from Board members who have significant expertise and experience in the field. It helpfully complements the discussions around specific actions and progress within the Improvement Plan to provide a more holistic approach to improving services.
- 3.9 The Board also receives monthly updates on the specific National Indicators for the timeliness of initial and core assessments. These are an important indicator of whether children who may be at risk are receiving an appropriate assessment within the statutorily required timescale. These are areas highlighted as a challenge in a number of previous external inspections and reviewing them specifically provides a helpful insight for the Board into the direction of travel within the service. The latest figures show that performance against these indicators is notably improving.
- 3.10 Following each Board meeting a number of key messages are produced and disseminated to leaders across children's services for sharing with staff and action as appropriate.
- 3.11 Whilst it is still relatively early to fully assess the Board's impact, senior officers involved have consistently reported that a good balance of challenge and support is being provided. The board has recognised both those areas where good progress is being made and those where the pace and impact of the action being taken needs to improve. This is helping to guide the focus of effort within services. The Independent Chair of the Improvement Board has (wherever possible) attended other relevant meetings to provide feedback and analysis from the Board's work.
- 3.12 Of the other meetings/arrangements established or in place that are giving further support to monitoring improvement in children's services, there has been a good level of compliance with the original expectations for how these would support the process. The full list at appendix 1 provides more details. Elected Members have been consistently involved, as well as the Executive Member for Children's Services being on the Improvement Board, the Member reference group has brought a cross-party approach to challenging the Improvement Plan, whilst the Children's Services Scrutiny Board is attended by Bill McCarthy quarterly so that the Board can link the Improvement Plan with the other performance management information they receive. The Executive Board is scheduled to receive a detailed update report in August 2010.
- 3.13 Whilst recognising the importance and benefits of having a range of groups supporting and reflecting on the main Improvement Board's work, officers are maintaining a reflective oversight of these to ensure that the groups that are in place are adding value. This ensures that the time and effort dedicated to servicing these various groups is well spent and ultimately supporting a better process that builds the knowledge and confidence of all those with an interest in this area.

#### The Transformation Programme Across Children's Services

- 3.14 To give Committee members a full appreciation for how the different strands of improvement work are currently being overseen, it is important to mention briefly the process in place to take forward the recommendations from the review of children's services that was reported to Executive Board in March this year. That review made

recommendations that will ultimately lead to more integrated children's services, including the winding down of the Education Leeds contract.

- 3.15 To deliver against this review a transformation programme was established, overseen by a Transformation Board that meets every two weeks. The Transformation Board includes senior representatives from partners across children's services in the city, including health, the police and schools. It is chaired by the Interim Director of Children's Services.
- 3.16 The Board has established a detailed programme of work with the aim that new arrangements will be fully established by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. Several key strands have been identified, with experienced project leaders managing these on the Transformation Board's behalf. A more detailed update on the progress and direction of this work will be submitted to the Executive Board in August 2010.
- 3.17 Whilst the details of this programme are not within the scope of this report, it is an important consideration in terms of the process for monitoring and delivering better services because the transformation work is intrinsic to achieving longer-term sustained improvement. The transformation programme is already part of the improvement plan, but as it gathers pace and scope the Improvement Board have recognised that the two increasingly need to be considered as a whole package so that the Board can see both the overall direction of change, as well as the particular action being taken to address specific challenges within services.
- 3.18 To assist the Board in achieving this balance, the refresh of the Improvement Plan (discussed in paragraph 3.5 above) will link the transformation programme and the improvements being made within services more clearly together so that the Improvement Board can monitor these as a whole and ensure they are complementing one another effectively.

#### **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

- 4.1 Improvement in Children's Services is a high priority for the Council. It is very important therefore that Improvement Plan, the transformation programme and the work of the Improvement Board are effective.

#### **5.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific legal and resource implications from this report. Support to the Improvement Board and other monitoring groups, is provided by existing Council resources.

#### **6.0 Conclusions**

- 6.1 The processes now in place to monitor and support service improvement have provided more clarity, focus, challenge and collective ownership in relation to the children and young people's agenda. In terms of services improvement, there has been progress made, but there also remain notable challenges, which the Improvement Board is aware of and focusing on.

#### **7.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee note the process in place to support, challenge and monitor the improvement required in children's services.

## Background Documents

Report to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee 17.03.10: 'The Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Services in Leeds'.

**Monitoring the Children's Services Priority Improvement Plan**

<b>Key Meetings</b>	<b>Purpose of Meeting</b>	<b>Frequency of Meeting</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Children's Services Leadership Team <i>(Chaired by DCS)</i>	Improvement plan delivery, monitoring and clearance of papers for the Improvement Board	Once a month	Meeting as intended
Children's Services Improvement Support Group <i>(Chaired by Council Chief Exec)</i>	Challenge and support for the delivery of the plan from a cross-council perspective. Manage follow-up from and preparation for Improvement Board	Once a month	Meeting as intended
Children's Services Improvement Board <i>(Chaired by Bill McCarthy)</i>	Advise on and challenge delivery, progress and outcomes of the Improvement Plan Monitor compliance with the terms of the Improvement Notice	Once a month	Meeting as intended
Children's Services Scrutiny <i>(Chaired by Cllr Chapman)</i>	Monitoring our progress against the plan on a quarterly basis	Quarterly	Built into the regular scrutiny performance management process, latest review in July 2010.
Executive Board	6-monthly review of progress against the Improvement Plan	6-monthly	Update scheduled for August 2010.
Member Reference Group <i>(Chaired by the Council Chief Exec)</i>	Briefing on progress against the plan and challenge as appropriate	Six weekly	Membership revised following the election. Met in early July 2010.
Leader Management Team	Briefing on progress against the plan and challenge as appropriate	Approximately once a month	Last update provided early July 2010. Improvement Board Chair in attendance
Children's Trust Board	Understanding progress against the Children's Services Priority Improvement Plan and driving forward necessary change	Every two months	Last meeting in June 2010.
Department for Education – Interim Reporting	Review progress specifically against the improvement notice.	Every six months (linked in to PI data)	Met in May to review March 2010 data. Due to meeting in Nov to consider Sept 2010 data. Also holding periodical reviews.

Appendix 2:

## **Improvement Board Membership**

### **Board Members:**

- Bill McCarthy (Chair), Chief Executive of NHS Yorkshire and Humber
- Councillor Judith Blake, Lead Member for Children's Services
- Gerry Broadbent, Leeds North East Divisional Commander, West Yorkshire Police
- Peter Roberts, Chief Executive of Leeds City College
- John Lawlor, Chief Executive of NHS Leeds
- Paul Rogerson, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council
- Penny Thompson, external challenge and support

### **Other Attendees**

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement)
- Eleanor Brazil, Interim of Director of Children's Services
- James Holden – DfE
- Helen McMullen - GOYH
  
- Senior colleagues from children's services, Education Leeds and partner organisations will attend and report into the Board as required