

Transformation programme

July 2010

NEWSLETTER

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Children's services in Leeds are making good progress and there are real signs of improvement, according to the head of intervention from the DfE.

Graham Archer met with council executives in July for the formal review of progress against the improvement notice. It is acknowledged that there is much to do, but confidence that we will continue to improve. The transformation board thanks everyone in children's services across the city for their continued efforts.

Eleanor's message



We've had a very busy and positive month! Appointing a new permanent director of children's services of the calibre and experience of Nigel Richardson is a big step forward. Nigel will join us in the autumn, but in the meantime he'll be regularly involved in and informed about our direction and decisions.

The six strands of work to shape our integrated model for delivering services have been agreed. Multi-agency working groups have begun the design stage and they will be gathering momentum in the weeks ahead.

Meanwhile, under the new government the national policy context around partnership working is changing. We know from experience that different services work best for the child or young person when they fit together seamlessly and put meeting needs at their heart. That is the aspiration of our integrated approach and it's why it's so important that we all continue to shape this agenda. Schools are integral to our success and in recent weeks I've been speaking with many headteachers about how we can make improvements together. We must continue this important dialogue.

As the design process moves forward into delivery we will have challenging decisions to make and some bold ideas to sign up to. It's time to be brave, ambitious and focused on what we're trying to achieve. The transformation programme is a chance to do things differently and better for children and young people. Let's keep sight of this opportunity as we shape the future.

Eleanor Brazil

Eleanor Brazil
Interim director of children's services

Transformation programme update

We're now planning a series of engagement events and opportunities to begin in September.

These will include two large scale 'blueprint' events, to share the results of the design work on front-line integration and business support services. These are expected to happen at the end of September or early October

There will also be a range of forum events bringing agencies and partners together, and a programme of visits for new director Nigel Richardson to meet children's services colleagues across the city.

More dates and details will be shared in the next newsletter, due out in early September. An update report about the transformation programme is also to be presented at the council's Wednesday 25 August executive board meeting.

Get in touch

Questions about the programme or information to share?

Contact us, email:
csreview@leeds.gov.uk

July 2010

Leeds welcomes new DCS and safeguarding chair

Two of the biggest jobs in Leeds' children's services have been filled over the last month.

Nigel Richardson has been appointed as the council's new director of children's services, while Jane Held has been appointed as the new independent chair of Leeds Safeguarding Children Board.

Nigel will join Leeds in September from Hull City Council where he is currently director of children and young people's services and assistant chief executive. He has been at Hull since 2005 and joined the authority when the government had intervened in services there.

Nigel played a big part in improving services for children and young people in Hull and helped deliver rapid improvements within just 18 months. Earlier this year, Hull was recognised as the most improved council in the country with an LGC award. A major part of the turnaround was the contribution made by the improvements in children's services led by Nigel.

Nigel's appointment is the first important step in creating the team and structure to lead and manage the

new era for children's services in Leeds.

Jane Held has a lot of experience in children's services at a senior and national level. She has previously chaired area child protection committees and a local safeguarding children board.

Jane attended her first Leeds Safeguarding Children Board meeting on Monday 19 July 2010, and will now take over as chair from Sandie Keene, director of adult social care, who has fulfilled the role since April.

All Leeds 'wave 1' BSF schemes to go ahead

The government's decision to end Building Schools for the Future (BSF) will not affect Leeds' award-winning £260m 'wave 1' BSF programme.

This means schemes at Mount St Mary's Catholic High School and Corpus Christ Catholic and Farnley Park Maths and Computing colleges will go ahead as planned. Funding also remains available for a refurbishment of the facilities at Parklands Girls High, which will become a co-educational (girls and boys) academy sponsored by E-ACT from September 2011.

These will be given multi-million pound transformations along with the five already completed new-builds and four refurbishments which are already on site. The BSF partnerships is also delivering the £30m new-build for Leeds West Academy.

The government has also announced a comprehensive review of all spending on capital programmes. The capital review team will look at every department's spending, aiming to drive down costs, deliver buildings more quickly and make sure a higher proportion of money goes direct to the frontline.

The secretary of state for education Michael Gove has committed to 'prudent' future capital spending on education, prioritising:

- creating the additional places/capacity required by increased pupil numbers,

- helping the most disadvantaged pupils, and
- refurbishing those schools in greatest need.

Leeds must now wait until after the spending review in the Autumn to find out what future process and funding might be available for all the other secondary, special and pupil referral unit provision not recently rebuilt or refurbished through BSF and other schemes.

You can read the full DfE announcement, and get lots more information at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/news/news/bsf-review>

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Government lays out plans for NHS

The government is consulting over some of its proposals for a radical overhaul of the NHS.

Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS describes the government's first step towards achieving its aim of providing some of the world's best health outcomes and services while making productivity savings of £15-20 billion by 2014.

The government wants to devolve power from Whitehall to professionals, who will be free to focus on improving health outcomes and quality of care, and to patients, who will get more information, choice and control so that services are designed around them.

The government will streamline the NHS and reduce management costs. Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts will be phased out, with groups of GPs given freedom and responsibility for commissioning care for their local communities. Providers of services will have new freedoms and they will be more accountable.

The government also wants to see greater competition and cooperation between providers, and sees a new role for local authorities to support integration across health and social care.

NHS Leeds is working with local health and social care partners to explore the implications the white paper will have for the NHS in Leeds

More detailed documents will be issued in the coming weeks as part of the White Paper consultation at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/LiberatingtheNHS/index.htm>

The full white paper can be seen at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_117353

Children's trusts partnerships

The secretary of state for education has indicated that he proposes to:

- remove the duty on schools to co-operate through Children's Trusts via the forthcoming Education Bill;
- remove the requirement on local authorities to set up Children's Trust Boards and the requirement on those Boards to prepare and publish a joint Children and Young People's Plan, at the first available legislative opportunity; and
- revoke the regulations underpinning the Children and Young People's Plan and withdraw the statutory guidance on Children's Trusts, in the autumn.

For more information visit:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/news/news/childrenstrusts>

For the sector, from the sector

C4EO are gathering and sharing examples of excellent practice on what works and why.

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children's and Young People's Services recognise that local knowledge and practice on 'what works' is often ahead of that contained in research reports, which can take months or years to publish. C4EO is using this valuable local resource to complement and extend the formal research evidence available to the sector.

For more information about practice that is leading to significantly improved outcomes for children, young people and families, visit www.C4EO.org.uk and follow the link on the homepage to local practice examples.

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Q and A

Isabel Jones, children's centre manager



When it was converted from an early years centre in 2002, Seacroft Children's Centre was one of the first of a new generation of local hubs designed to provide a range of services for children and families. Eight years on, it is a perfect illustration of some of the strong foundations on which Leeds can build truly integrated children's services.

In Isabel Jones' eight years as manager of the children's centre, its role has changed enormously from its early focus around child care. The centre now offers 60 day care places and a range of flexible services, including outreach workers serving a community containing 367 children under five.

Despite 25 years as a professional in Leeds and six in her native Glasgow, life at Seacroft Children's Centre reminds Isabel that she will never have seen it all.

"You simply have no idea what any day will bring. We're a central provider and access point to a range of services so we could be offering financial advice, support with alcohol abuse, domestic violence situations...absolutely anything.

"We may have a family come in wanting childcare or help with debts or some other support but you don't get to the root causes of the problems until later on."

Isabel tells the story of one family which epitomises the importance of two essential elements to achieving successful outcomes through integrated working; getting to know the family, and being able to quickly galvanise a full range of local services.

"Every child and family is unique

so to get to the root of those issues you have to get to know them well. It can take a long time to engage with families and build trust, but it is worth it to see the outcomes.

"We recently gave support to a parent and child that were involved with the centre. The child was having behavioural difficulties which were having an impact on both his and his mother's life. Through meeting with parent and offering support and advice with other professionals including Education Leeds, health and the school the boy is due to go to, we have been able to provide a package of services. We discovered the family was also having problems with the boy's diet, so made a referral to a nutritionalist. There have been great improvements and the boy will now be able to make a much more successful transition to school.

"This is a journey the family could not have made on their own, or with one agency acting alone."

Last week the boy's mother wrote a letter to the centre saying that their support has been beyond all her expectations. And for many families the integrated services approach will do the same; just by making them aware of support that they never knew existed.

For example, the family outreach workers at the centre will 'cold-call' families they hear about or see with young children and talk to the families about their situation, the centre, and support which may be available.

"Recently this cold-calling brought us to discover a family with a problem they had no idea how to resolve. We were able to carry out a CAF and involve the family with housing and health services. They became a priority case and were able to move to new accommodation and life for them and their children is now a lot better."

As well as its own outreach workers and schools, the centre also receives referrals from health visitors, social care and other agencies. Isabella and her colleagues have developed a very strong local network so that when they are receiving or making a referral they will almost always know the person on the other end of the phone. They also always share information with other agencies to coordinate decision-making and agree on the support for each family, so the CAF process reflects and formalises the centre's successful existing practice.

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This centre is just as open with the families it is supporting.

"We know that the level of information sharing could cause issues, so it is our policy that parents and carers are made aware that we may need to share information with other agencies, and unless there are real child protection issues we tell them before we do it and get written consent.

"The open and honest culture we've built, including giving families access to their children's file, has really helped to limit the resistance."

Building this level of trust and securing the right support is not easy.

Isabel explains: "You have to have patience. We have just been working with one parent who had left school at an early age and did not work.

"We got to know her and built up trust, then started with a confidence building course provided through a counsellor, and then she took part in a parenting course. We also took her as part of a group to colleges to see courses on offer, and to meet job centre plus who discussed all the advantages of gaining qualifications and being in work. That parent is now in work, which is brilliant for her and will have a very positive impact on her child."

This example reveals how resource intensive some cases

can be. In increasingly difficult financial times the centre is obviously looking for ways it can generate income and provide sustainable services which are not dependent on heavy subsidies, such as providing childcare to working parents in the area.

Isabel believes that in Seacroft we are on the right track towards building integrated services round the children and family.

"We still have a long way to go, but can achieve it if we all as professionals take control of it so we have instant referrals leading to the right support, quickly."

Government departments set out timelines for reform

Government departments have published their draft structural reform plans, which outline how they will achieve the reforms set out in the Coalition Agreement.

The reform plans spell out the departmental priorities, and give a timeline for the actions they will take to achieve them.

You can follow these links to see key departments' plans:

Department for Education

<http://www.education.gov.uk/news/news/~media/Files/lacuna/news/SchoolsSystemStructuralReformPlan.pdf>

Department of Health

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_117370.pdf

Department of Local Government and Communities

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/16359212.pdf>

Serious case review published

Birmingham safeguarding children board has published their report from the serious case review into the tragic death of Kyra Ishaq.

Hilary Thompson, the chair of the board, said: "The report identifies missed opportunities, highlighting that better assessment and information-sharing by key organisations could have resulted in a different outcome."

The overview and full report can be found at:

<http://www.lscbbirmingham.org.uk/downloads/Case+14.pdf>