

Report of the Director of Children’s Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 02 November 2011

Subject: Children Services Improvement Update Report (November 2011)

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. This report provides Executive Board with an update on the improvement activity that is continuing across Children’s Services in Leeds. It follows a series of similar reports presented regularly to Executive Board to provide an overview of the work taking place across the directorate and partnership, particularly in the context of the work of the Children’s Services Improvement Board.
2. The report focuses particularly on the following key areas:
 - Improvement and inspection activity – including an update of the work relating to the Improvement Notice and the Improvement Board, actions following the recently published Ofsted report for the re-inspection of safeguarding, and the forthcoming annual assessment of children’s services; and
 - A brief summary of the ongoing work to transform Children’s Services.
3. The report notes the ongoing improvement trajectory, evidenced through inspection reports and reflected in correspondence between the Minister of State and the Improvement Board chair, and the remaining work to ensure that further improvements

are delivered through the ambitions of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The report notes that the next progress review with the Department for Education (DfE) will be on 7th November, that the annual assessment for children's services will be published on 8th November, and that a further update will be provided at the December Executive Board.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that Executive Board note the contents of this report, in light of the Ofsted inspection report considered at its October meeting, and supports the continuing direction of travel across Children's Services in Leeds as we come to the end of the period of the government Improvement Notice.

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides Executive Board with an update on the improvement activity that is continuing across Children's Services in Leeds, following earlier reports of a similar nature.
- 1.2 The report focuses particularly on the following key areas:
 - Improvement and inspection activity – including an update of the work relating to the Improvement Notice and the Improvement Board, actions following the recently published Ofsted report for the re-inspection of safeguarding, and the forthcoming annual assessment of children's services; and
 - A brief summary of the ongoing work to transform Children's Services.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Executive Board has received regular improvement update reports from Children's Services since March 2010, when it received a report about the Improvement Notice, the Improvement Plan, the Improvement Board and the wider council monitoring arrangements through Executive Board, Scrutiny and the Member Reference Group. These reports have noted an overall trajectory of improvement, whilst recognising that some significant challenges remain. It is timely to present another update report to Executive Board, given the recent Ofsted inspection report, the fact that we are reaching the end of the Improvement Notice period, and that the annual assessment letter from Ofsted will be reported in November.

3.0 Main issues

Improvement Work:

- 3.1 Since the last Improvement Update report to Executive Board in June 2011, the Improvement Board has continued to meet regularly to monitor and challenge progress. In August, Bill McCarthy, chair of the Improvement Board, wrote an update report to the Minister of State. This is attached at appendix 1 to this report. This letter reports overall progress being made with the Improvement Plan, and provides specific updates around areas of interest including – directorate structure, locality integration, and the review of the local authority's work with schools (see the paper on the Leeds Education Challenge, also included on this agenda, for more information) . It concludes with reference to a likely forthcoming inspection (i.e. the announced inspection that took place in September 2011) being the key to the chair's next report to the minister and the basis on which the chair would make any recommendations about the future of the Improvement Board.
- 3.2 Tim Loughton, the Minister of State, has replied to the chair of the Improvement Board, in a letter dated 23 September – attached at appendix 2. In this letter, the Minister talks about being encouraged by the progress being made across the partnership, and refers to the inspection as being a test of progress made on safeguarding. This letter also sets out the expectations in relation to education services and schools, with a clear expectation of the Leeds Education Challenge speeding up the pace of improvement. Given the separate report on the Leeds

Education Challenge elsewhere on the Executive Board agenda, the detail is not included here.

- 3.3 Ofsted will publish the annual assessment letter for Children's Services on 8 November 2011, setting out overall performance based on the full range of inspections it conducts, include settings (e.g. schools, residential homes, nurseries, children's centres, childminders, 6th forms, colleges, fostering and adoption) and services, such as the most recent unannounced inspection (published February 2011) and the most recent announced inspection (published October 2011). It also takes into account our performance on serious case reviews and our performance on a range of performance indicators. This will be reported to Executive Board and the Children and Families Scrutiny Board in December.
- 3.4 The Improvement Notice for Leeds is due to end at the end of October 2011. A progress review meeting is due to be held between officials from the DfE and Leeds on 7 November, which will discuss progress across all areas of the Improvement Notice. This will inform the Minister's decision about the ending of the Improvement Notice, or any alternative arrangements that may be put in place to ensure that the improvements delivered to date are sustainable. The outcome of this will be reported, along with a consolidated position against the Improvement Notice, to the December Executive Board.
- 3.5 We are working on a high level Improvement Plan, which will contain:
- Actions in response to the recommendations in the most recent Ofsted inspection report on Safeguarding.
 - Any issues that are contained within the annual assessment when it is published on 8 November.
 - Any outstanding areas from the current Improvement Plan.

This revised Plan will not necessarily provide all the detailed actions, but it will signpost to other action plans – such as those for the City Priority Plan and CYPP delivery. We will report this Improvement Plan and proposals for monitoring and governance to a forthcoming Executive Board.

Wider Transformation Work across Children's Services

- 3.6 The work to transform children's services across the city continues. A variety of more detailed update information has recently been shared with elected members through: Executive Board in previous update reports; Area Committees; Scrutiny Board; and with schools and clusters.
- 3.7 In addition to the report elsewhere on the agenda on the very important issue of the Leeds Education Challenge - a key building block for the next stage of improvement - work is also continuing on several other key strands of transformation work. This includes:
- The ongoing 'roll-out' of the outcomes based accountability methodology across the partnership, including a major two day training event facilitated by Mark Friedman, at the start of October.

- Continuing development of restorative practice approaches to unify ways for partners to work together and work differently with children and families. Training for staff is continuing in this area and it is being used to inform the development of the new integrated approach.
- The work to implement the new structure for the directorate is continuing at speed, although there has been a slight delay because of the recent inspection. The internal interview process for the next tier of leadership positions is underway and the details of service design work for the teams that will sit beneath these leadership positions are being finalised.
- Work is progressing with the procurement and planning for a new Electronic Social Care system for children's services, and an update will be provided in the December Executive Board update.
- The work on clusters is also continuing. Member Management Committee have recently considered a report to ensure that the role of councillors on the new cluster partnerships is fulfilled. A seminar for all members to raise awareness of the cluster approach has been planned for 4th November.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Improvements in children's services and specifically safeguarding arrangements are a priority for the city. The latest developments therefore need to be seen in the context of the ongoing city-wide focus on this agenda.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading,

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Improvements in children's services and specifically safeguarding arrangements are a priority for the city. The latest announced inspection findings confirm the positive overall trajectory of this work. As the period of the Improvement Notice draws to a close, the Improvement Board reviews its arrangements and the Annual Assessment is scheduled for publication, this is an important period in setting the tone and direction for the next stage of developments across children's services. The wider transformation work taking place underpins this direction, aiming to move the service towards a more integrated approach that improves outcomes for children, young people and families across the city.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that Executive Board note the contents of this report, in light of the Ofsted inspection report considered at its October meeting, and supports the continuing direction of travel across Children's Services in Leeds as we come to the end of the period of the government Improvement Notice.

7.0 Background documents

- 7.1 Children's Services Improvement Update: report to Executive Board June 2011.