

Ofsted Focused Visit Improvement Plan

Date: 13th October 2021

Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Children and Families Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- This report follows the recent two-day Ofsted Focused Visit to the Leeds Children and Families Front Door conducted on the 20th and 21st July 2021 and provides an update on the action plan that has subsequently been implemented.
- The report and its proposals support the ambitions and priorities for the Children and Families Directorate, the Council and the city as a whole as set out in the Best Council Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan, Inclusive Growth Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Ofsted inspectors identified a number of strengths in Social Work practice and Early Help in the Front Door Focused Visit, they highlighted three recommendations for practice improvement. Inspectors found no areas of serious weakness and no examples of children being left unsafe. The three recommendations for improved practice are:
 - The quality and consistency of assessments to ensure that key information and family history is gathered and analysed to inform decision-making, and the quality of children's plans.
 - The quality and impact of management oversight and supervision to ensure that decisions are timely and well recorded.
 - The quality and independence of audits to ensure that they provide learning to support improvement in social work practice and provide senior managers with an understanding of the quality of that practice.

Recommendations

The Scrutiny Board is asked to note the actions of the focused visit improvement plan and to monitor as appropriate.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. Scrutiny was provided with an update by the Director of Children and Families on 15th September 2021 on the findings from the recent two-day Ofsted Focused Visit to Leeds Children and Families Front Door conducted on the 20th and 21st July 2021.
2. Scrutiny has requested verbal feedback on progress of the action plan at each Scrutiny Board. This report provides detailed information on the action plan.
3. Inspectors found no areas of serious weakness but highlighted three areas for improved practice which are addressed in the action plan:
 - A. The quality and consistency of assessments to ensure that key information and family history is gathered and analysed to inform decision-making, and the quality of children's plans.
 - B. The quality and impact of management oversight and supervision to ensure that decisions are timely and well recorded.
 - C. The quality and independence of audits to ensure that they provide learning to support improvement in social work practice and provide senior managers with an understanding of the quality of that practice.
4. Inspectors noted that where a child may be at risk of significant harm, strategy meetings are taking place but that less than half of all strategy meetings are attended by the three key safeguarding partners (Leeds City Council, the NHS and West Yorkshire Police).
5. To address the three recommendations A-C above, to improve the timeliness of contacts at the front door and to improve the inclusion of partners at all strategy discussions an action plan is now in place.
6. The action plan includes a daily strategy discussion escalation process to ensure that any individual challenges are highlighted and addressed as a matter of urgency to enable attendance by all the three key partners. Additional resource has been identified to support full attendance by all three partners and multi-agency process mapping will take place during September to enable the strategic partnership to fully understand any ongoing barriers and to address these as a matter of priority.
7. The multi-agency weekly referral review meeting is monitoring the attendance and quality of strategy discussions and has noted improvements since the Focused Visit. Single agency and multi-agency performance management and quality assurance activity has been enhanced to provide additional scrutiny and progress and an action plan is in place for the Duty and Advice Team that includes a focus on timeliness and ensuring that all conversations are comprehensively recorded.
8. All strategy discussions are audited on a weekly basis by service managers in the area social work teams and any issues are addressed with team managers and partners as appropriate.
9. In response to recommendation A- the consistency and quality of assessments. The training and development offer for social workers and social work managers has been reviewed and enhanced by a program of learning, focusing on assessment skills, report writing and decision making. In addition, a new action learning program has been developed for team managers to support consistency in audit, supervision, and planning. The program will be based on an action learning model and will include several sessions that will support ongoing learning and reflection. Furthermore, the principle social worker will be facilitating several practice forums for social workers to assist their development in key practice areas.

10. In response to recommendation B- the quality and impact of management oversight and supervision. An additional session (on a rolling program) will be provided for all team managers focusing on the recording of reflective supervision. A comprehensive training program of supervision is already in place and will be enhanced by this element. All team managers will receive an observation of their supervision by their line manager, feedback will support their learning needs moving forward.
11. An action plan has been established at Duty and Advice which ensures all contacts to the front door are reviewed if they do not have an outcome recorded within 24 hours. All decisions will be recorded immediately by team managers to evidence line of sight, rationale and decision making.
12. In response to recommendation C-the quality and independence of audits. The social care quality assurance framework has already been reviewed and actions have been taken to strengthen the cross auditing of work across teams and the moderation of audits. Both new processes begin in October 2021. In addition, a quarterly audit report has been developed which will provide senior managers with an understanding of the quality of practice across social care.
13. The covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the health and well-being of social work practitioners and managers in Leeds. Working from home has compromised the opportunities for face-to-face discussion, reflection and learning for the last 18 months since the pandemic began, thus impacting on the consistency of practice. To mitigate the impact of the pandemic the service is working at pace to ensure social work teams have access to office space for at least 50% of the working week. This will include access to collaboration spaces and spaces to meet with children and families in the community. Resumption of face-to-face team meetings and supervisions are being made a priority.
14. The duty and advice team have worked from home during the entirety of the pandemic, the social work practitioners operate as a part of a multiagency group of professionals ordinarily collocated in Merrion House. Relationships between partners at the front door have been built over years of face-to-face engagement; good outcomes for children and families rely on those relationships. As part of the action plan the duty and advice team will return to be based at Merrion House.
15. Progress against the improvement plan will be closely monitored by the social care senior leadership team. The Chief Officer for social work is leading a two weekly meeting to review the plan which is attended by relevant officers. In addition, the Director of Children and Families is chairing a Recovery Board which will oversee and monitor progress on the plan.
16. **What impact will this proposal have?**

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 17 The Children and Families directorate undertakes regular day to day consultation and more formal focused consultation and engagement activity with a range of children, young people and families.

- 18 The directorate has an active Voice and Influence team who facilitate and enable the voice of children and families to shape and influence service delivery and development.
- 19 The directorate has developed a 'Let's Talk' programme that has enabled families with lived experience of the directorate and its services to shape and influence services in the here and now and in planning for the future.

What are the resource implications?

- 20 There are no resource implications, the Children and Families directorate will implement the Focused Visit Improvement Action Plan with its existing resource,

What are the legal implications?

- 21 The Children and Families Social Work Service has a range of statutory functions, the Improvement Action Plan will ensure that legal duties and responsibilities are fulfilled through the delivery of consistent high-quality child and family led practice and services.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 22 The key risk is inconsistency in practice and service delivery that may result in poorer outcomes for children and families. The directorate has developed an Improvement Action Plan. Progress against the Improvement Action Plan will be closely monitored by the Children and Families Senior Leadership Team through its performance management and quality assurance framework and newly established Recovery Board.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 23 This report and its proposals support the ambitions and priorities for the Children and Families Directorate, the Council and the city as a whole as set out in the Best Council Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan, Inclusive Growth Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Climate Emergency and 'Thrive' Poverty Strategy.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

- 24 The Children and Families Directorate have developed and implemented a Focused Visit Improvement Action Plan, this was felt to be the best option to address the recommendations from Ofsted, the plan will be monitored through directorate's existing performance management and quality assurance framework and newly established Recovery Board.

b) How will success be measured?

- 25 As above, progress against the Children and Families Focused Visit Action Plan will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team through the directorate's existing performance management and quality assurance framework and the newly established Recovery Board.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

- 26 The directorate has taken immediate steps to action the recommendations from Ofsted.

Appendices

27 None

Background papers

28 None