

Ofsted Focused Visit Improvement Plan

Date: 26th January 2022

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 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 several 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 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. 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. In terms of an update from 13th December 2021, team manager action learning sets are in place and several sessions have been held particularly around decision making and analysis in assessment. In addition, we have commissioned Professor David Shemmings to undertake the following:
 - New ideas on decision-making for social work leaders and practitioners in child protection and family support – 3 sessions in Nov / Dec 2021
 - Producing Analytic Reports and Records – 2 sessions in 2021
 - New Insights for Practitioners into Assessment and Decision-making – 6 sessions Jan / Feb 2022
5. The Principal Social Worker has delivered three practice forums each month with a key practice area of focus for October, November, December, and further sessions planned for January and February in the interim. All sessions have and will continue to incorporate feedback from OFSTED, audits, national learning and sharing of good practice. The October forums were focused on assessments with November Forums focused on plans for children and December forums on supervision. January will be focused on statutory visits and February on the voice of children and families.
6. In response to recommendation B- the quality and impact of management oversight and supervision. A comprehensive training program of supervision is already in place. All team managers will receive an observation of their supervision by their line manager, feedback will support their learning needs moving forward. Training and development sessions focusing on the recording of reflective supervision for social work managers will take place in early 2022 over 5 separate sessions which are 18th January, 20th January, 26th January, 2nd February and 8th February – there are a total of 100 spaces for this training. The

supervision framework will be relaunched in March 2022 once all managers have attended the reflective supervision sessions.

7. 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. Compliance with this requirement is monitored by the service delivery manager for Duty and Advice.
8. 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. Since the last scrutiny report in October 2021, the first quarterly quality assurance report has been written and shared with the social care senior leadership team. Three moderation panels have been set up per month, one for cluster social work teams, one for the child health and disability teams and one for the children looked after and care leaver teams. Each moderation panel aims to moderate three case files. Furthermore, additional moderation is being undertaken by an individual who has previously been a principle social worker in neighbouring Local Authorities. Learning from the moderation panels is shared in the quarterly QA report.
9. Whilst it was not a recommendation from Ofsted, the letter did note improvements needed to consistently secure multi-agency attendance at strategy discussions. The health economy in Leeds has facilitated a multi-agency workshop exploring solutions to this issue. Three strands have been agreed as part of this work; the health triage process (workshop has already taken place); convening strategy meetings; and agreeing a shared understanding across the partnership of “significant harm” and the timing and prioritisation of strategy meetings. The percentage of strategy discussions where all three partners have contributed has increased since July 2021 and the performance for September to November 2021 is 71%.
10. To monitor progress of impact and outcomes a rolling program of audit and moderation is underway. This includes monthly case file audits by team managers and service managers in addition to suite of thematic audits covering the following themes: assessment, supervision, strategy discussions, pre-birth assessments, and section 47 enquiries. The outcomes of these audits have provided reassurances to the leadership team on quality of practice. Learning points have been coordinated into an action plan to contribute to continuous practice development.
11. The impact of this learning is under constant review by Advanced Practitioners and managers at all levels, this will be supported by a specific piece of quality assurance work that will review a selection of case files alongside a qualitative appraisal which will include the findings from a survey of social workers and Team Managers. This will enable the service to understand how managers and practitioners have benefited from the practice forums and training sessions noted in this report and the impact of this on practice development at outcomes for children and families. A survey of the views of children and families will also take place.

12. Progress against the improvement plan will continue to 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.

13. **What impact will this proposal have?**

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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?

17. 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?

18. 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?

19. 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

20. 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?

21. 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?

22. 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?

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

Appendices

24. None

Background papers

25. None