

Terms of Reference

Background

On 7 December 2009, Leeds City Council formally agreed with Dawn Primarolo MP, Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families, to establish an Improvement Board led by an independent chair.

This proposal was in response to a range of challenges identified across children's services following an unannounced inspection of contact, assessment and referral services in July 2009 and subsequent inspections/assessments. The key inspections/assessment included:

- Ofsted's July 2009 unannounced inspection of contact, referral, and assessment services which identified a number of 'priority areas for action';
- Ofsted's annual children's services assessment published in 2009 which concluded that 'whilst the majority of the local authority's inspected and regulated services provision in children's services are good or better there are significant weaknesses in areas of social care provision' which led to a performance assessment of performing poorly;
- The Area Assessment published in December 2009 which identified safeguarding as being a key issue of concern and identified as a 'red flag';
- The announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children which was published on 7 January 2010 and identified that whilst positive progress was being made, significant challenges remain, particularly in regard to safeguarding which remains to be assessed overall as being inadequate. The assessment for capacity to improve was judged as being adequate.

The DCSF has also issued Leeds City Council with a (currently draft) Improvement Notice specifying the performance measures required to comply with the Improvement Notice; a range of actions to be progressed; timescales for those changes; how delivery against the Improvement Notice will be monitored and assessed; and, the action that may be taken by the DCSF if there is a failure to comply with the requirements of the Improvement Notice.

Progress against the requirements of the Improvement Notice will be assessed by:

1. The Improvement Board receiving regular updates on performance and actions against the measures and actions identified within the Council's agreed Improvement Plan;
2. The Chair of the Improvement Board reporting to the Minister for Children, Young People and Families and Leeds City Council¹ on a bi-monthly basis, and;
3. Formal six-monthly interim reviews² reporting performance against the requirements of the Improvement Notice,.

An Improvement Plan will be produced by the Council, in partnership with others as appropriate, incorporating not only the Improvement Notice and key inspection findings but also the outcomes of the significant review of children's services leadership, governance and partnership arrangements

¹ The chair will report to the Council's Joint Leaders on a bi-monthly basis, as well as the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) at agreed intervals, to update Members of Council on progress being made.

² Following initial consideration by the Improvement Board, the formal six-monthly interim reviews will also be submitted to the Council's Executive Board, the Council's Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

that the authority has undertaken. The Improvement Plan will be signed off by both the City Council and the Improvement Board and will provide the context for the Board's work.

Purpose:

The Leeds Children's Services Improvement Board will advise on, and challenge the content of, delivery, progress and outcomes of the Improvement Plan and monitor compliance with the terms of the Improvement Notice.

Chair:

- The Board will be chaired by an independent chair
- Bill McCarthy, Chief Executive of NHS Yorkshire and Humber has been jointly appointed by Leeds City Council and DCSF to undertake this role.
- If the Chair is unable to attend any meeting then he/she shall appoint an appropriate person from the existing Board membership to deputise in his/her absence.

Board Membership:

- Bill McCarthy, Chief Executive of NHS Yorkshire and Humber
- Paul Rogerson, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council
- Councillor Stewart Golton, Lead Member for Children's Services
- Chief Superintendent 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
- Penny Thompson, external challenge and support

Others in Attendance:

- The Council's Director of Children's Services
- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement)
- Senior colleagues from children's services, Education Leeds and partner organisations will attend and report into the Board as required
- A representative from GOYH and the DCSF Intervention Team will be invited to attend in an observer capacity

Meeting Frequency:

The Board will meet on a monthly basis and a schedule of meetings will be agreed for 2010 in the first instance. Meeting requirements for 2011 will be considered by the Board in the autumn of 2010.

Quorum:

The Improvement Board has no specified quorum. It will be a matter for the chair to determine whether there are sufficient members either present or able to attend to undertake the necessary business of the Board.

Alternates:

Members of the Board will be required to attend in person or send their apologies. Deputies cannot attend in place of Board Members. For others attending the Board to support its work, deputies may attend with the prior agreement of the chair.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board will:

1. Consider, comment upon and agree the detail of an Improvement Plan (to be prepared and agreed formally by the Council) which will provide a focus for the Board's work;
2. Ensure the requirements of the Improvement Notice, as issued by the DCSF, are adequately and appropriately addressed within the Council's Improvement Plan;
3. Receive proposals for addressing the key performance issues identified within the Improvement Notice and monitor progress including the receipt of relevant performance management information;
4. Oversee, monitor and challenge progress on, the implementation of the Council's Improvement Plan;
5. Advise on the implementation of the Improvement Plan, assessing risk and considering issues that arise that may be impeding on the delivery of the plan e.g. constraints such as IT, financial or staffing issues;
6. Assure itself that front-line practitioners, customers and partners are all being appropriately engaged by the Council in addressing the key performance issues identified within the Improvement Plan;
7. Assure itself that the Council has appropriate governance arrangements and practices which are sustainable in the longer term, in order to maintain a high standard of performance across children's services;
8. Agree the future work plan of the Board;
9. Support the chair in agreeing the key issues to be formally reported to the City Council and the DCSF as part of the formal reporting requirements, and;
10. Consider reports from the City Council and its partners, as may be required, on the wider improvement agenda in children's services.

Dissolution of the Board

The Board will be dissolved by a joint-decision of the Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families and Leeds City Council following a recommendation from the Board that all of the key requirements in the Improvement Notice have been sufficiently met and are sustainable. Any change in the Board membership will need to be agreed with the DCSF, the City Council and the Independent Chair.

Administration

Leeds City Council will be responsible for the preparation of the agenda and papers for the meetings of the Board, in consultation with the Independent Chair. Papers will be distributed to Board Members at least five working days in advance of the meeting. Leeds City Council will also be responsible for the administration, clerking and hosting of the Board meetings and will ensure that minutes are taken and distributed to Board members within one week of a Board meeting. The Chair should agree minutes before circulation.