



Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Executive Board

25th August 2010

Children's Services Improvement Update Report

Electoral Wards Affected: All wards

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In March 2010 Executive Board received reports that detailed:
 - Arrangements made to deliver, support and monitor improvements in children's services in view of recent inspection findings and a government Improvement Notice, and
 - The outcomes of a strategic review of children's services arrangements recommending services should be re-organised to a more integrated delivery model.
2. This report updates Executive Board on:
 - Implementation of Leeds' Improvement Plan for Children's Services and the work of the Improvement Board to oversee this.
 - The transformation programme to deliver an integrated delivery model for children's services.
 - The development of a new Children and Young People's Plan by spring 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. It is recommended that Executive Board:
 - i) Note progress against the Improvement Plan for Children's Services in Leeds and the work of the Improvement Board to support this.
 - ii) Note the intention to consult on and then develop a new Children and Young People's Plan for Leeds, ready by spring 2011,

- iii) Note and endorse the progress of the transformation programme so far and the next steps to develop and propose a revised leadership structure and a model for integrated service delivery and integrated business support functions, which will be brought back to Executive Board in Autumn 2010.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 This report updates Executive Board on:

- Implementation of Leeds' Improvement Plan for Children's Services and the work of the Improvement Board to oversee this.
- The transformation programme to deliver an integrated delivery model for children's services.
- The development of a new Children and Young People's Plan for the city by spring 2011.

It sets this work within the context of the shifting national policy direction around children's services and emerging financial context. It seeks endorsement for the next stage of developments in relation to the transformation programme.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 In March 2010 Executive Board received two significant children's services reports. The first of these detailed the arrangements in place to deliver, support and monitor improvements in the service in view of recent inspection findings and an Improvement Notice served by the government. It focused on the Improvement Plan that had been developed and the independently chaired Improvement Board established to monitor this.

2.2 The second report detailed the outcomes of a strategic review of children's services arrangements in Leeds and recommended that services be reorganised to a more integrated delivery model in the future. This included bringing education services currently provided by Education Leeds back within the local authority by April 2011.

2.3 The recommendations from both reports were approved. They included a commitment to bring regular updates back to Executive Board.

2.4 Since March there has been a lot of activity to take forward the necessary improvement work and the wider transformational programme that stemmed from the strategic review report. The national context for children's services and particularly for schools has also changed considerably during this period, primarily as a consequence of the change of government and therefore a shift in policy direction nationally.

2.5 At its April meeting the Executive Board approved proposals for new Children's Trust Arrangements. This led to a new Children's Trust Board and revised Leeds Safeguarding Children Board being established. The Children's Trust Board has started to consider how to take forward the Children and Young People's Plan for Leeds. Although the current plan runs from 2009 – 2014, a full review for 2011 was always intended given the changing context, changing priorities and the importance of linking in with the 2011 review of the Leeds Strategic Plan and Leeds Vision.

2.6 The Council has also recently appointed a new Director of Children's Services, Nigel Richardson, who will join Leeds in the autumn and a new independent Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board, Jane Held, who started working with Leeds in July.

2.7 It is a timely opportunity therefore to update Executive Board on progress in children's services and seek both endorsement for the next stage of the transformation programme and indications as to how members wish to be kept informed and involved as the implementation of the programme gathers momentum in the coming months.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 National Policy Context

3.1.1 Under the coalition government there are some significant policy changes, and policy reviews taking place, whilst these are not the main focus of this report it may help Members to have a brief overview of them when considering the information that follows. The Department for Education (DfE) (which replaces the Department for Children Schools and Families) has indicated its intention to give more freedoms to different services working on the children and young people's agenda. This has been progressed most rapidly so far around the work of schools, with the introduction of the Academies Bill, giving more schools the opportunity and encouragement to become academies and as such have much greater independence from the involvement of the local authority. It is also likely to be a theme of the Munro Review of Child Protection and the Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage, both of which were announced recently. An independent commission into early intervention has also been established.

3.1.2 The coalition government has made a number of significant funding decisions relating to existing children's services projects. Some of the implications for Leeds are considered in a separate paper to the Executive Board. A consultation on the introduction of a Pupil Premium has been launched. This consultation closes in mid-October. Whilst emphasizing its commitment to partnership working, the coalition has indicated its intention to remove the statutory requirement for local areas to have a Children's Trust Board and a Children and Young People's Plan. The implications of the latter in terms of a plan for Leeds are discussed in more detail further below.

3.1.3 Policy changes impacting on children, young people and families are not isolated to the Department for Education. Announcements from, for example, the Department of Health, the Home Office and as part of the emergency budget relating to future benefit entitlements, will all change the current context in which children's services partners operate.

3.1.4 Leeds Children's Trust Board has responded to an invitation from the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, to submit initial written views and feedback to help shape an ongoing dialogue between local areas and the Department.

3.2 Improvement Activity and Performance

3.2.1 During 2010, Children's Services has been using a single, coordinated Improvement Plan as the primary tool for monitoring specific progress and actions highlighted by Ofsted inspections and ratings and the government's improvement notice. The Plan has been valuable in bringing together, in one document, the wide variety of activity needed to deliver better services and enabling a reference point to check progress.

3.2.2 Given its length and scope the Plan has not been considered in full at every Improvement Board meeting, instead the Board agreed a process whereby they would focus on specific themes from within the Plan at each of their meetings, whilst also continuing to receive a more detailed monitoring report each month providing an overview across all areas. The monitoring report covers:

- Summary of current strategic position.
- The top six areas of focus.
- Updated position on top six areas of focus.
- Updated risks and mitigating actions.

- Detailed monitoring update.

- 3.2.3 It uses a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating system to judge progress against each of the actions in the Plan. As at the July report to the Improvement Board, out of 53 actions in total, 13 were rated as green, 36 were rated as amber and 4 were rated as red. Of the 13 rated as green, 5 are regarded as complete. There have been particularly positive improvements on issues including the timeliness of initial and core assessments, the recruitment of new social workers and reducing custodial sentences.
- 3.2.4 The areas rated as red in July relate to issues around: information gathering on looked after children data; capacity effectiveness and monitoring of child protection conferences; practice and recording issues around the involvement of children, young people, and families in child protection processes; and response rates to child protection referrals, ensuring appropriate multi-agency discussions taking place around these. Against each of these areas, actions to deliver improvement are clearly defined and will be monitored by the Improvement Board. On these specific issues the recent appointment of a new, highly experienced Head of Service for Looked After Children and Interim Head of Safeguarding has given fresh impetus, ideas and capacity around these and several other critical issues within Children and Young People's Social Care. Our quality assurance arrangements need strengthening further and work is underway to do this.
- 3.2.5 The Improvement Board itself has met monthly throughout 2010. At its May meeting, in line with the requirements set out in the government's improvement notice, the Improvement Board received an interim stocktake on the 2009/10 end of year (quarter four) performance data. This helped to identify the areas where targets set by central government were on track and those where faster improvement is needed. This in turn informed the Board's work plan for future meetings. The next stocktake will be done in November 2010 on performance up to the end of September 2010.
- 3.2.6 Each month the Board also requests information on specific areas or themes considered high priorities. To date these themes have included:
- Effective leadership and governance
 - A skilled and motivated workforce
 - Safeguarding
 - Looked After Children
- 3.2.7 As a suite of documents the Improvement Plan monitoring report, the stock take specifically against the improvement notice and the themed, more detailed reports on key areas of work have given the Improvement Board a comprehensive range of information. They aim to combine a broad overview, with attention to detail where it is needed and most importantly, an accurate appraisal of areas that continue to present concerns in terms of performance and ultimately therefore, outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.2.8 The Board's work is complemented by a number of mechanisms for reporting performance to appropriate groups. A report to the July meeting of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee provided details and assurances around the meeting programme that links to the Improvement Board. For example: periodic meetings between Members, Senior Officers and Department for Education (DfE) representatives to review key information being submitted to the Improvement Board and in doing so contribute to the support and monitoring process; an elected member reference group; and an internal group chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.

- 3.2.9 Various performance information is also submitted to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board and to Area Committees. As well as being updated on the Improvement Board's work (with regular attendance from the Improvement Board's Chair), the Scrutiny Board receives a quarterly update on national and local performance indicators. During this year a process has also been established to regularly take a selection of localized performance information to Area Committees. Wherever possible this breaks down some key children's services indicators by committee and by ward. The first series of these reports were presented in February 2010. The next round of reports are scheduled for the September 2010 series of meetings. They will include information on: initial and core assessments; looked after children; Common Assessment Framework data; the number of young people not in education, employment or training and the number of young people whose status is 'not known'. This report will be followed up in January 2011 with another round of similar reports, but focusing primarily on educational outcomes.
- 3.2.10 The process for delivering and monitoring improvement at both a city-wide and local level is therefore becoming well established. There is evidence that against many important outcome areas continuing improvement is being made. The combination of interim leadership arrangements to focus on performance, the Improvement Plan, Improvement Board and the other monitoring arrangements in place have given better focus and co-ordination to the work being done across children's services. There is a stronger level of awareness and understanding of the performance issues and the solutions needed to improve them. Elected members are taking a close and active interest in monitoring and supporting this.
- 3.2.10 Following a recent monitoring meeting with the DfE, Tim Loughton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families has written to the Chair of the Improvement Board, Bill McCarthy to comment on the current position in Leeds. This letter is attached at appendix 1. Its overall tone is positive, whilst recognising continuing challenges, including the implementation of the very complex and ambitious transformation programme. The Improvement Board will continue to meet monthly for the foreseeable future.
- 3.3 Transformation Programme
- 3.3.1 Following Executive Board's approval of the report on the Strategic Review of Children's Services, work began immediately on the process to plan for and then implement new arrangements. From the outset the focus of this work has been to involve partners from the range of children's services across the city, not just those of the local authority.
- 3.3.2 A Programme Board was established to ensure senior representatives from key organisations share ownership of the changes taking place. The Board is chaired by the interim Director of Children's Services and includes senior managers from children's services, Education Leeds, the Council's corporate leadership, NHS Leeds, the Police and a primary and secondary school headteacher. The Board meets every two weeks to ensure momentum of the programme is maintained.
- 3.3.3 The Programme has 3 overarching strands:
1. Ending the contract with Education Leeds
 2. Developing integrated business support, including commissioning
 3. Developing integrated service delivery

- 3.3.4 Although the initial focus is on integrating the local authority and Education Leeds functions and services, opportunities for broader integration with health, the police and schools are also being explored. The three strands listed above are running simultaneously to ensure new arrangements are implemented in a coordinated way.
- 3.3.5 In terms of work to end the Education Leeds contract, good progress has been made to identify all the key issues involved. A lead out plan has been developed, agreed and signed-off by the Chair of the Education Leeds Board and the Interim Director of Children's Services.
- 3.3.6 Work on integrated business support is evolving in view of the need to make additional savings in light of recent budget cuts announced by the government and the need to link with wider corporate reviews of Council services. There is a strong desire to progress co-location and joint working opportunities as soon as possible. Initial proposals have been developed and are being implemented for interim changes to functions including performance, complaints, accommodation and buildings, finance, I.T. and HR.
- 3.3.7 The integrated service delivery strand may be of particular interest to members as it will have the greatest impact on frontline services. It has been organised into six key areas of work:
- a) leadership and governance
 - b) Disability /SEN/ additional health needs
 - c) Looked after children
 - d) Safeguarding
 - e) Universal services
 - f) Well-being teams (locality based)
- 3.3.8 For the design of each strand, multi-agency project teams have been established and have been working over the summer to draw up detailed proposals for how these functions should be taken forward. This design work is linking closely with the Locality Pathfinder developments and the Think Family and Total Place agendas. Proposals will be considered by the Programme Board and the Children's Trust Board in September and then made available for extensive consultation, engagement and development until half-term. Further details will be brought back to Executive Board in the autumn.
- 3.3.9 The top tier leadership structure for children's services will be crucial to shaping the future direction of the service. In re-designing the leadership model we will ensure there is sufficient professional expertise and senior management capacity to undertake the required tasks. The leadership team will be responsible for leading the drive to achieve the vision and ambitions set out in the Children and Young People's Plan. To deliver this we are proposing that all Chief Officer posts reporting to the DCS will have common responsibilities in relation to:
- Achieving better outcomes for children and young people
 - Providing leadership as part of the team to deliver change and improvement
 - Promoting integrated working and effective partnership working
 - Contributing to the corporate priorities of the City Council
 - Making best use of our resources, including staff, buildings and other assets
 - Having a flexible attitude to changing role and responsibilities in the light of new developments and emerging needs
- Chief Officers will also have specific responsibilities to ensure clear leadership for the full range of functions within the service.

- 3.3.10 It will be essential that this team, together with the DCS, collectively deliver dynamic, proactive and resourceful leadership. It must drive improvement in:
- Direct service provision
 - Commissioning to meet needs
 - Effective strategic partnership working and
 - Strategic planning to achieve the best outcomes we can for children and young people in Leeds.
- 3.3.11 The Interim Director is working with the newly appointed permanent Director of Children's Services (prior to him taking up post) and with the current senior leadership team and senior leaders from partner services to develop these proposals. More detailed proposals will be put to Executive Board in the autumn.
- 3.3.12 The changes taking place will require ownership from all staff in order to be successful. At the same time, given the need for more efficiency they will inevitably raise questions and concerns. A process of regular staff communications is already in place and this will gather pace in the coming weeks through regular workshops and other activities. We will work closely with schools and other stakeholders as part of this. A HR Framework to guide issues likely to arise as we move from the design into the delivery phase has also been agreed. Unions are appropriately involved.
- 3.3.13 The Executive Lead Member for Children's Services is being kept regularly informed about the progress of the transformation programme. We are particularly keen to secure more engagement with elected members in the coming months as proposals take shape, particularly around local well-being teams. Existing opportunities, such as Scrutiny, Area Committees and political group meetings will be used.
- 3.3.14 It is clear that the transformation programme is being progressed in the context of significant budget challenges and emerging national policy, both within the local authority and amongst those partners Leeds is working with. A review of providers in Leeds commissioned by children's services is currently underway and this will also inform how proposals for the future take shape. The transformation programme also presents a timely opportunity in that it enables Leeds to identify efficiencies in children's services as part of a full overview of the service, rather than in isolation within different parts of the service.

Children and Young People's Plan 2011

- 3.4 To help ensure the integrated model for children's services helps to deliver a more joined-up and consistent approach to service delivery it is important that services are working towards clear, shared priorities. Leeds' current Children and Young People's Plan runs from 2009 – 2014, but its focus is on priorities between 2009 and 2011. It was always the intention to review the Plan in full ready for 2011 to ensure its continuing relevance and link in to the development of the new Vision for Leeds for 2011 – 2030. Re-affirming a strong vision for outcomes for children and young people and linking this to families is particularly important in view of the changing national and local policy and financial context.
- 3.4.1 Currently Children and Young People's Plans are a statutory requirement for all local areas. However, the coalition government has clearly stated its intention to remove this statutory obligation by April 2011. This will mean Leeds is no longer required by government to produce a Children and Young People's Plan. In anticipation of this change, senior leaders from partners on the Children's Trust Board have considered the implications and options. The collective view is that Leeds will still benefit significantly from having a document that captures the shared vision and priorities for

children's services in the city, however it is too early to determine how close such a document will remain to the format and level of detail within the current Plan. As such senior leaders have drawn up outline proposals for the priorities within a future Plan and over the coming months consultation will take place on these proposals, along with consideration of how a new Plan can best be structured to deliver the maximum benefit to services and the public in Leeds.

3.4.2 The proposals put forward make a distinction between developing *how* future improvement will be delivered - identifying the themes emerging from the transformation programme around locality working, integrated services and early intervention – and determining what the priority areas of work should be. The proposal is to consult on simplifying to three broad priority areas:

1. *Improving the safeguarding of children and young people:* Through well-embedded child protection systems and practice, tackling substance misuse by parents, and reducing the impact of domestic violence and anti social behaviour on children and families.

2. *Improving early years and primary stage outcomes:* Through intervention and prevention in the early years and improving outcomes at key stage 2, targeting those most at risk of relatively poor early learning and primary outcomes, and known to be susceptible to poor outcomes in later stages of childhood. This will include tackling barriers to participation including irregular school attendance, obesity and low self esteem.

3. *Better outcomes at 16 and 19 through improved participation and engagement of children and young people:* Reducing NEET, improving behaviour and attendance at school, reducing and preventing offending, reoffending and anti social behaviour, tackling key health issues such as teenage pregnancy and substance misuse.

3.4.3 The Plan will be developed in a way that complements and coordinates with the progress of the transformation programme. Members will be involved in the consultation process, for example through Area Committees and Scrutiny and the Plan will be presented to Executive Board once it is drafted.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 Making the improvements required in children's services is a key priority for the local authority and for the city. It is critical therefore that the Improvement Plan, Improvement Board and the transformation programme all make a significant contribution to achieving these improvement. It is also important that this work is monitored appropriately through other Council bodies, such as Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, Scrutiny and the Executive Board so there is clear understanding and ownership of this agenda.

4.2 As the strands of work within the transformation programme take shape, particularly the work around integrated service delivery (such as the focus on leadership and governance and on local well-being teams) it is essential that this links across to other relevant agendas within the Council and its partners. Clear understanding of accountability and decision-making will be key to underpinning a future structure and these will be issues addressed in more detail as the proposals for new arrangements are considered from September onwards.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 The transformation programme is guided first and foremost by the desire to deliver improved, integrated services and as a result, better outcomes to children and young people in Leeds. However, in the current financial climate particularly, it also offers an opportunity to identify more efficient ways of working and clearer commissioning arrangements for the future. It is too early to be specific about the details of such efficiencies, but as the design phase of the programme is finalised this is expected to become clearer and can be built into budget savings for 2010-11 and more significantly, budget planning for 2011-12. More details will be shared with Members as they become clearer.
- 5.2 The legal aspects of the winding down of the Education Leeds contract are being handled appropriately by the Council's legal services. There are no specific issues to bring to the Executive Board's attention at this time.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The various work taking place to secure improvements, coupled with the changing national and local policy and financial context, make this a critical and busy period for children's services in Leeds. Feedback indicates that work being done is moving services in the right direction, but we know there is still much to be done to implement long-term lasting improvement. During the remainder of 2010 the transformation programme will move from the design into the delivery stage, building on the direction set out in this report. More details will be shared with Members over the autumn. Shared vision and priorities will be an important part of taking this work forward in the longer term so the development of a revised Children and Young People's Plan for 2010 remains an important area of work.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that Executive Board:
- i) Note progress against the Improvement Plan for Children's services in Leeds and the work of the Improvement Board to support this.
 - ii) Note the intention to consult on and then develop a new Children and Young People's Plan for Leeds, ready by spring 2011.
 - iii) Note and endorse the progress of the transformation programme so far and the next steps to develop and propose a revised leadership structure and a model for integrated service delivery and integrated business support functions, which will be brought back to Executive Board in autumn 2010.

Background Documents

'Children's Services Improvement Arrangements' Report to Executive Board 10.03.10

'Update on the Process for Ensuring Improvement in Children's Services in Leeds'
Report to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee 29.07.2010