



Report of the Director of Children’s Services

Executive Board

9th March 2011

Children’s Services Improvement Update

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

1.0 This report follows on from a series of update reports presented to Executive Board during 2010 charting improvement, performance and development activity across children’s services. It covers:

- *Improvement Activity* – Reference to key recent inspections (reported separately to Executive Board) and an update on recent performance information presented to the Improvement Board.
- *Development of the vision and approach for children’s services* – progress on the Children and Young People’s Plan and the outcomes based accountability methodology.
- *Service redesign and transformation* – progress towards more integrated working.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.0 It is recommended that Executive Board

- (i) Note the outcomes of the stock take of progress by the Improvement Board.
- (ii) Acknowledge the significant positive impact made overall since the unannounced inspection in July 2009.
- (iii) Endorse the use of outcomes based accountability as the central methodology to help drive the delivery of the priorities in the new Children and Young People’s Plan.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update to Executive Board on improvement and development activity in children's services since the last update report to Executive Board in December 2010.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In December 2010 Executive Board received a report providing an update on the emerging new vision for children's services in Leeds, based around the aspiration to become a child friendly city. That report also highlighted the progress of improvement activity across the service and gave the most detailed public outline so far of the emerging shape of the revised children's services structure, which will deliver a more integrated approach to help deliver improved outcomes. The report made a commitment to provide a further update to Executive Board.
- 2.2 It is now timely to provide such an update in view of various stock-take activity and inspections that have been reported, or published during the first quarter of 2011 and to ensure members remain aware of how the emerging vision and structure for children's services are taking shape.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 The update report in December, whilst recognising ongoing challenges in some key areas, presented a positive overall assessment of the direction of travel and performance against the Improvement Plan and in terms of the wider progress across the service. That progress has continued during 2011 so far and has been highlighted in a number of developments.

3.2 Improvement and Inspection Activity

- 3.2.1 Of particular significance in terms of the overall performance, confidence and position of the service has been the Ofsted Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements. This inspection took place on the 18th and 19th January. The letter reporting on this inspection was published on 16th February. It is particularly significant for Leeds as it was the previous unannounced inspection, carried out in July 2009, that highlighted many of the challenges that have been the focus of improvement activity and resources over the past 18 months.
- 3.2.2 A separate report on the 9th March Executive Board agenda discusses the outcomes of the unannounced inspection in more detail and includes the letter from Ofsted as an appendix. It is important that members note the findings of that inspection along with the information below about other improvement activity.
- 3.2.3 The unannounced inspection has followed other important recent inspections of children's services, including Adoption and Youth Offending Service inspections, both of which were reported to Executive Board in February. We

know we have some important continuing challenges, but the combination of these various inspection outcomes indicates a positive overall trajectory for the standard of services being provided to some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Leeds.

3.2.8 The findings of these various external inspections are complemented by the ongoing performance monitoring work being lead by the independently chaired Improvement Board. As part of these regular Improvement Update reports, Executive Board has received a summary of the performance information recently presented to the Improvement Board.

3.2.9 In January 2011, the Improvement Board received a half-year stock-take of performance against the ongoing Improvement Notice. The stock-take highlighted areas where assurance could be given that actions were complete and can be closed, or were being effectively monitored through other formal performance management processes, leaving fewer as outstanding areas of focus in areas where significant risks still remain.

3.2.10 The stock-take categorised the 48 actions in the Children's Services Improvement Plan into one of three categories, either:

- (i) The issue requires continued monitoring by the Improvement Board, but with recommendations being regrouped.
- (ii) The issue can now be monitored by another accountable body, but may be referenced in thematic reports to the Improvement Board, or
- (iii) The actions against the recommendation are complete and therefore can be closed with no further reporting to the Improvement Board.

3.2.11 Of the 48 actions reviewed, it was recommended that 17 continue to be monitored by the Board, 12 be monitored by other accountable bodies and 19 be closed. In the areas where continuing monitoring is recommended: four relate to the effective delivery of the restructure of children's services (including the ending of the Education Leeds contract); eight relate to safeguarding practice, primarily around the timeliness, completion of and (children's) involvement in child protection processes; four relate to the services provided to looked after children; and one relates to the improvements needed around the electronic social care recording system.

3.2.12 In those areas requiring continued monitoring a clear set of realistic but challenging timescales have been developed to lead us through the current transitional stage, as the new Children and Young People's Plan is developed and agreed.

3.2.13 In view of the shifting context that this progress collectively represents, discussions are ongoing about how to take forward the role of the Improvement Board to continue its performance monitoring role where appropriate, but to also draw on its collective expertise to support the next stage of development for children's services in Leeds. In the short-term the Board is receiving more focused monitoring information on the ongoing priority

areas. Beyond that we are working to define an appropriate remit for the Board's future work.

3.2.14 Elected members continue to be kept informed of how performance is developing through a number of routes. The Children's Services Scrutiny Board will receive its latest suite of quarterly performance information at its March meeting. Area Committee meetings were provided with a report updating members about overall strategic developments in children's services and detailing areas of key performance information relating to school standards and education, employment and training participation (NEET data). This was broken down to a local level to support a more detailed understanding for different areas and wards.

3.3 Development of the Vision for and Approach to Children's Services

3.3.1 In December the update report to Executive Board highlighted the development of a new vision for children's services, built around the aspiration to become a child friendly city and underpinned by five outcome areas and 11 priorities. The table below provides a reminder of these and highlights the starting points agreed at the Children's Trust Board meeting on 31st January.

Five outcomes for children and young people in Leeds:	We will major on 11 priorities to deliver these outcomes.	We have 3 starting points – our initial 'obsessions' where we want to make rapid progress
Are safe from harm	1.help children to live in safe and supportive families 2.ensure that the most vulnerable are protected	Looked After Children 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) Attendance at School
Do well in learning and have the skills for life	3.support children to be ready for learning 4.improve behaviour, attendance and achievement 5.increase the levels of young people in employment, education or training 6.improve support where there are additional health needs	
Choose healthy lifestyles	7.encourage activity and healthy eating 8.promote sexual health	
Have fun growing up	9.provide play, leisure, culture and sporting opportunities	
Are active citizens who feel they have voice and influence	10.reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour 11.increase participation, voice and influence	

3.3.2 This vision will be articulated through a new Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). It is proposed that the plan for 2011-15 will be a short document

which focuses on setting out in simple terms what Leeds is like for Children and Young People and how the Children's Trust Board proposes to improve outcomes. A draft of the plan will be presented to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board in March, with a proposed final version presented to Executive Board and then Full Council later in the year (to tie in with the timescale for the city's other priority plans). An equality impact assessment of the draft plan is also being undertaken and this will inform the final content of the plan.

- 3.3.3 To initiate work on the three starting points, a series of 'turning the curve' workshops were held at the end of January (with elected members who sit on the Children's Trust Board invited). These introduced the 'outcomes based accountability' methodology that has been used successfully by a variety of public organisations in Britain and internationally.
- 3.3.4 Outcomes based accountability (OBA) is a way of thinking and approach that develops practical action plans through "turning the curve" exercises. The method takes the current baseline performance trend, and asks partners to agree a trajectory for improved performance and to describe the actions that will "turn the curve" towards the desired improvement. The approach takes partners through the following stages:
- How well are we performing in this area?
 - What is the baseline position against the key indicator?
 - What are the causes of the trends and the issues lying behind them?
 - What are the information requirements?
 - Who are the key partners, and how can we work together to produce an action plan that will improve outcomes for children and young people?
- 3.3.5 The outcomes based accountability workshops have given fresh impetus to activities to address the priorities highlighted above. Action plans emerging from these initial sessions will be incorporated into the new Children and Young People's Plan. Where it is possible to do so work will begin on them straight away.
- 3.3.6 Partners on the Children's Trust Board have acknowledged the value of the outcomes based accountability methodology and have agreed to pool resources to enable this methodology to be rolled out across the city. In addition, through the Corporate Leadership Team the wider Council is monitoring how this approach progresses, with a view to using it to deliver against the other city-wide thematic plans currently being developed.
- 3.3.7 The consistent application of outcomes based accountability will therefore become an ongoing feature of how we will drive improved progress towards better outcomes for children and young people in Leeds.
- 3.3.8 Another key element of delivering effectively against the ambitions set out in the new Children and Young People's Plan will be the ability to monitor and target resources more effectively. The Children's Trust Board has considered joint financial and investment planning. It has supported the development of a joint financial and investment plan to enable the delivery of the Children and

Young People's Plan with an initial focus on the priority of 'helping children to live in safe and supportive families'. This would mean that partners would agree to align current spend and future investment in key areas to underpin commissioning and service plans in order to have maximum impact and benefit. The plan will initially cover intensive support to children and families, including mental health provision and joint funding arrangements for placements that require funding from more than one agency responsible for the care of children and young people.

3.4 Service Redesign and Transformation

- 3.4.1 In the December 2010 update report, Executive Board were provided with a detailed overview of the proposals developed up to that point about the new structure for children's services. The Board approved the broad direction set out in that paper, including information about the senior leadership posts.
- 3.4.2 Work has continued to take the proposals from the broad design phase into a more detailed understanding of how the new model will be delivered and to understand the connotations for existing teams and services. The four senior leadership positions that will report directly to the Director of Children's Services have been refined, with job descriptions drawn up. These posts are due to be advertised during March and will be open to both internal and external candidates.
- 3.4.3 During March we will also finalise details of the tier three posts in the new structure and complete an equality impact assessment of the new senior structure proposals. With the tier two and three posts agreed we will have the framework to further progress the detail in each area. Our continuing ambition is to have the majority of new arrangements in place by the end of September – particularly so that things are in place locally, ready for the start of the new school year. In the meantime we are working actively with staff to keep them informed and supported, particularly in the run-up to the termination of the Education Leeds contract at the end of March.
- 3.4.4 We are keen to fully involve schools and other key partners in service transformation work. This includes developing a new relationship with schools with clear understanding and expectations about how we will work together to improve outcomes. At the start of March we launched a Service Prospectus. This brought together in a single website the services the local authority deliver on behalf of the children of Leeds to all learning providers, those services funded by the council and delivered specifically to maintained schools and children's centres which other providers will have to pay for, and traded services offered on a full cost recovery basis.
- 3.4.5 This work is aided significantly with the temporary appointment in January of Simon Flowers, an experienced head teacher from Carr Manor High School, into the role of Strategic Leader for Education Integration. A multi agency implementation team is also now in place to support transformation work, further develop the proposals, drive implementation and support extensive communications with stakeholders. As well as Council officers, a number of

head teachers offering part time support and representing our primary, secondary and special schools are involved, along with experienced children's centre and voluntary sector representatives. The Service Prospectus referred to above is being developed further between March and June to clarify those services funded by the council and delivered via area or locality partnerships rather than to individual schools.

- 3.4.6 We are progressing work to increase the emphasis on locality working. Proposals are being developed to build on the work of extended services clusters, use outcomes based accountability approaches in localities and support locality projects to assist with service integration. It is planned to take a report to the Children's Trust Board on 24th March to propose refreshed cluster partnership arrangements. This will build on the development of partnership approaches at a city level through the Children's Trust Board which has been operational since April last year and the work done in local cluster partnerships across the city over recent years. In line with a previous report to Executive Board in December 2009, it is planned to recommend that elected members are involved in these local children and young people partnerships. It is also planned that the work of the partnerships and support to the roles of elected members in them is provided through a 'Local Authority Partner'. This would be a senior officer in children's services undertaking this role as part of other leadership and management responsibilities.

4.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 4.1 The progress reflected in the unannounced inspection and the stock take reported to the Improvement Board in January demonstrates a positive direction of travel overall for children's services in Leeds. This is important for the Council as progress in this area is a Council and city priority. It is important that a collective focus is maintained on this area of work to ensure ongoing shared-responsibility and joint action to reduce the risk of harm to children and young people across Leeds.
- 4.2 Proposals for a new Children and Young People's Plan fit in with the framework recently approved at Executive Board for the development of new city priority plans. It is planned for partnership governance for this to continue through the Children's Trust Board which was approved by Executive Board in April 2010.
- 4.3 Once proposals for local children and young people partnerships have been discussed by partners through the Children's Trust Board, the involvement of elected members in them will be followed up through the Member Management Committee.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal or resource implications within this report.

- 5.2 Members may wish to note that the unannounced inspection letter positively recognises the impact of the significant investment in children's services and particularly child protection services that the Council has made since 2009.
- 5.3 Whilst the council and all partners are experiencing a very challenging financial climate, the opportunity to work more closely with partners and develop joint financial and investment planning provides scope to use our limited resources more effectively.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The start of 2011 has been a significant period for children's services. The unannounced inspection assessment coupled with the stock take undertaken for the Improvement Board indicates that children's services are in a notably stronger position overall than when the Children's Services improvement arrangements and review of Children's Services were presented to Executive Board twelve months ago. This does not mean that the improvement work needed is complete, there is still much effort required to implement and embed a range of necessary changes.
- 6.2 However, this report does suggest that children's services are now in a stronger position to move forward. Over the coming months the ability to finalise the Children and Young People's Plan with wider ownership of its vision and methodology along with the ability to implement the children's services transformation programme effectively and efficiently will be critical. This will have to be done in a challenging financial context with some particular pressures on the children's services budget that will be difficult to tackle. However, the positive developments outlined in this report should increase confidence about the ability to deliver against these ambitions. We will continue to keep elected members involved in and updated on this work.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that Executive Board
- (i) Note the stock take of progress by the Improvement Board.
 - (ii) Acknowledge the significant positive impact made overall since the unannounced inspection in July 2009.
 - (iii) Endorse the use of outcomes based accountability as the central methodology to help drive the delivery of the priorities in the new Children and Young People's Plan.
 - (iv) Note the continuing progress with service design and transformation activity to support better integrated working in children's services.

Background Papers

'Children's Services Improvement Arrangements' Report: Executive Board- 10.03.10
'Children's Services Improvement Update Report' Report: Executive Board- 25.08.10
'Children's Services Improvement Update Report' Report: Executive Board- 15.12.10