

## **Cabinet**

**Date: 10th April 2018**

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### **Children's Social Care Improvement Plan**

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, Cath McEvoy

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Wayne Daley

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### **Purpose of report**

To present Cabinet with an updated position on current progress in relation to the Children's Social Care Improvement Plan.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- 1) Cabinet note the progress made against the actions of the Improvement Plan.
- 2) Members are requested to identify any areas that they feel require additional scrutiny or challenge.

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the Stronger Communities and Families and Health and Wellbeing corporate priorities.

### **Key issues**

1. The Improvement Plan was finalised at the end of 2107 and shared with all relevant bodies including the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board, the Corporate Leadership Team and Family and Children Scrutiny Committee.
2. The plan identifies the priorities and actions that are needed to address the key areas for improvement identified within children's social care.
3. It is monitored on a monthly basis by the Children's Services Senior Management Team to ensure progress is being made and track the impact

that this is having. There have been 2 such meetings since its implementation. There has been progress made against all priority areas.

4. In a recent focused visit, Ofsted evaluated the plan in line with the self assessment and concluded that they believed that Children's Services knew itself well and that the plan was leading to improvements in practice.
5. The 3 key priorities were endorsed by Ofsted as providing the correct focus for developing the quality of practice and making sure that children received services that met assessed need:
  - Demand management: ensuing children and families receive the right service at the right time.
  - Cultural change: setting the right environment for good quality social work practice.
  - Workforce development: ensuring we have a workforce who are suitably qualified and experienced to deliver good quality services.
6. The updated Improvement Plan is set out in Appendix 1.

## **BACKGROUND**

Following the Ofsted inspection in 2016, an action plan was developed to address the recommendations identified as part of the inspection process. This action plan expanded as further challenges about practice arose and additional areas for development were identified. At the same time, a number of areas were signed off as actions were successfully completed and changes implemented

It became clear, however that the changes needed to the service were more than just what Ofsted had identified and that the focus should be on an overall improvement plan.

There are 10 key areas outlined within the plan with links to other relevant plan and lead officers tasked with progressing them. The areas have identified outcomes and impact that will be evident if the plan is successful.

Below is the outline of the key development areas and highlights around progress made against them:

### **Priority 1: Ensure all children and families receive the right help at the right time from the right service.**

- Development of the 'front door' is now well on its way with launch of MASH in February and recruitment to key roles within the team.
- Early help workers are critical partners in the Front Door and there has been a recent increase in demand and work is ongoing to try and understand this.

### **Priority 2 : Improve and promote frontline social work practice in relation to eye assessment processes and statutory safeguarding procedures.**

- Training has been completed and will be continually reinforced in relation to assessments and child protection processes.
- Clear improvements in practice although still some way to go.
- Re investment in Signs of Safety model has commenced.
- A new area has been added to this priority around development of a risk assessment tool as highlighted in the recent Ofsted focussed visit.

### **Priority 3: To raise standards of practice around key areas of social work linked to planning for children and ensure timely progression of plans for children leading to assessed needs being met.**

- Plan templates have been reviewed and relaunched with an audit planned later in the year.
- Court training and workshops have led to improved and more timely court applications and an improved reputation with the judiciary.
- Gateway process for permanency planning is not yet in place but is work in progress.

**Priority 4: Ensure effective leadership and management is available to support and promote good practice across all areas.**

- Management training programme ongoing at all levels.
- Tri X procedures due to launch at the end of March to allow for standardised procedures.
- Budget management work ongoing with savings identified for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

**Priority 5: To ensure all care leavers are supported to participate in employment, education and training (EET).**

- Significant service review has taken place within the Northumberland Adolescent Service which will help to improve service delivery.
- Peer review will help to ensure that the service is going in the right direction.
- Recording of EET/NEET is now more effective meaning that the extent of the challenge is better understood.

**Priority 6: To promote a positive culture to ensure that all social work staff work within the right environment, enabling them to flourish and thrive in the workplace.**

- Practice week has now taken place and feedback is currently being collated to look at any additional development areas.
- Training programme around customer service culture has been sourced and will be rolled out to all frontline staff.
- Learning from complaints is now routinely discussed and cascaded.

**Priority 7: Improve QA processes so it is embedded in all services and is used to promote high quality practice from the start of the child's journey.**

- Quality Assurance framework is now embedded and audits are regularly undertaken both on a themed and individual case file basis.
- Analysis of the outcomes indicates that we are improving in key areas such as assessments and voice of the child. The number of cases judged to be inadequate has significantly reduced but there is still a lot of work to do.

**Priority 8: Increase the sufficiency of high quality looked after placements to offer placements for children appropriately.**

- Reduction in the use of independent foster placements and increased the number of in house placements.
- Plans to increase the in house residential provision ongoing.

**Priority 9: Recruit, retain and develop and professional, committed and stable workforce.**

- ASYE academy currently being recruited to and plans to be in place by the autumn.

- Investment in training for social workers to ensure they have the skills to do the job.
- Ongoing recruitment programme but challenges remain about maintaining an experienced workforce.

**Priority 10: Embed the work of the new early help locality model in each area.**

- All actions complete except the development of an effective dashboard to measure the impact of early help which is work in progress.

## IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

<b>Policy:</b>	
<b>Finance and value for money:</b>	
<b>Legal:</b>	
<b>Procurement:</b>	
<b>Human Resources:</b>	
<b>Property:</b>	
<b>Equalities:</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	
<b>Carbon Reduction:</b>	
<b>Wards:</b>	

### CONSULTATION

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

### Report sign off.

Finance Officer	
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Human Resources	
Procurement	
I.T.	
Interim Director of Children's Services	CMc
Portfolio Holder(s)	WD

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## Appendix 1 - Improvement Plan