

Name of meeting: Children's Scrutiny Panel

Date: Wednesday 9th November

Title of report: Children's Services 10 Point Improvement Plan

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress towards delivering the actions and improvements to Kirklees Children's Social Care set out in the 10 Point Improvement plan and to provide the panel with a refreshed plan for information.

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| Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards? | Not applicable If yes give the reason why . |
| Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?) | Not applicable If yes also give date it was registered |
| The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny? | Not applicable If no give the reason why not |
| Date signed off by Strategic Director & name | Steve Walker 16/10/2018 |
| Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services? | N/A |
| Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support? | N/A |
| Cabinet member portfolio | Cllr Kendrick |

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

1. Summary

The purpose of the 10 Point Improvement Plan is to improve Children's Social Care and Safeguarding systems in Kirklees, ensuring vulnerable children and young people get the best start in life and are safe and protected from harm.

The plan sets out our approach to delivering the recommendations from the 2016 Ofsted inspection, the focus is on improving social work practice and compliance.

The 10 Point Improvement Plan has been refreshed to ensure it is relevant and focuses on the right priorities to take us from where we are now to an embedded culture of practice where we, and all partner agencies are consistently and confidently doing the right things for children and young people, ensuring children getting the best start in life is everyone's business and owned by all.

Children's Social Care Services in Kirklees continues to improve. The pace of change is growing now that the strengthened leadership team and workforce has stabilised after a period of change, enabling them to build strong relationships for change with children, families and partner agencies across Kirklees.

As a result of the progress made, a new DCS - Melanie Meggs has been recruited, with backing from Ofsted and the DfE.

The strategy for improvement in the refreshed plan remains unchanged – to create the 'conditions for success' that are the foundation for good practice and better outcomes.

Kirklees has invested time, effort and money in building these foundations by recruiting confident, experienced practice and strategic leaders, building a workforce with the capacity and skills for success through recruitment, retention and development, promoting learning and reflective practice, developing a shared restorative culture and practice model, improving early help partnerships and services, reforming and reinvigorating the 'Front Door' to services as a strong, multi-agency decision making hub and above all, a relentless focus and grip on practice and decision-making.

The strategy is working – practice is better and outcomes are improving. Crucially the safeguarding system is being rebalanced – improved practice and decision making as well as stronger services in key areas mean that more needs are being met earlier without the need for lengthy statutory interventions and care, and where protection in care is needed, good plans lead to quick progress.

Referral rates have fallen, the number of children with a Child Protection Plan has been reduced significantly and the number of Children Looked After has begun to fall and as a result caseloads have reduced, helping create space and time for social workers to undertake development and continually improve.

Highlights include improvements and investment in Early Help partnerships and services, further strengthening of joint working in the Front Door, particularly around domestic violence and improved child protection practice leading to reduced drift and delay and better progress and outcomes for children and young people.

However, despite the progress made and the capacity to continue to improve further and faster, we know that there is more to do and there are areas where our high standards are not yet consistently met. Whilst the majority of practice is improving and much of it is good, practice remains too variable overall. Improved quality assurance systems continue to show that with a sizeable minority of audited cases are judged to be 'requires improvement to be good'.

In light of the relative newness of many teams, staff and managers this is perhaps to be expected at this stage of our improvement journey. It is our expectation that as the service stabilises further, caseloads will continue to reduce and management and workforce development programmes have an impact, this will improve performance further over the next six months and practice will be consistently good.

The main concern which has been shared with OfSTED previously is the quality and timeliness of Recording, Assessment and Planning (RAP), because this is fundamental to good social work, and despite improvements, there is still more to do to ensure all practice is consistently good.

Wider areas for improvement include: continuing to reduce caseloads overall, with additional focus on the small minority of staff with higher caseloads; continuing to improve support for Care Leavers in order to raise the proportion in education, employment, training and suitable accommodation; raising the pace of improvement in the timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) and ensuring consistency in the timeliness of statutory visits.

2 Information required to take a decision

Not applicable. This report is for information only.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)

Kirklees has invested in improving both the services and the partnership needed to improve early support for children and families. The Council has worked with schools, NHS, Police and wider partners to develop and agree a shared Early Help Strategy and investment in additional staff and new services such as the development of local 'community hubs'. More children and families are being supported through early help.

3.2 Economic Resilience (ER)

Care Leavers are a priority in the Improvement Plan; Working with partners to improve support for care leavers to engage and succeed in learning and work, including work with the University of Leeds on Go Higher, and continuing to enhance and expand care experienced apprenticeships. In addition the Virtual School is now working with 16-18 year olds, linking Personal Education Plans to pathway plans, this will be extended from Y12 to Y13 this year.

3.3 Improving Outcomes for Children

Outcomes for Children will be improved through the successful delivery and implementation of the actions contained within the plan.

3.4 Reducing demand of services

Improved decision making, understanding and assessment of risk and multi-agency working is already safely and appropriately reducing demand across the system. From referrals into the safeguarding 'front door' through to children looked after, a whole system transformation is starting to be seen with the right children getting the right support at the right time.

3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

Not applicable

4. Consultees and their opinions

Not applicable

5. Next steps

Not applicable

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

Not applicable

7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations

Not applicable

8. Contact officer

Elaine McShane – **Service Director Family Support and Child Protection.**
elaine.mcshane@kirklees.gov.uk

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Refreshed Children's Services 10 Point Improvement Plan attached for information.

10. Service Director responsible - Elaine McShane