

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 24 November 2015

Report of: Kath O'Dwyer
Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services

Subject/Title: Children and Young People's Improvement Plan

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Rachel Bailey

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report updates the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposed action plan to address the recommendations and areas for improvement identified by Ofsted in its inspection report of Children's Services, published in September 2015.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
- a) Note the contents of this report, the draft improvement plan at Appendix 1 and action plan at Appendix 2;
 - b) Propose any suggested amendments to the documents; and
 - c) Endorse the arrangements for submitting the plan to the Department for Education and Ofsted in December 2015.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The Council has a statutory responsibility to co-ordinate arrangements to ensure the effectiveness of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in Cheshire East and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Cabinet agreed at its meeting in October that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee would provide oversight of delivery against the improvement plan to meet the recommendations from the Ofsted inspection. It is important therefore, that the Committee is appraised of the draft plan to provide 'good' services for these vulnerable children and young people in Cheshire East and to ensure that the proposed actions will address the areas for improvement.

4. Background

- 4.1. The effectiveness of Cheshire East's arrangements for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers was inspected by Ofsted in July 2015. Inspectors also carried out a review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The Inspection report of their findings, published in

September 2015 identified 17 recommended actions for the local authority and partners and a further 8 recommendations for the LSCB to get to a consistently 'good' standard.

- 4.2. Significant engagement has taken place with stakeholders since the publication of the report, including workshops with senior managers, other staff and partners and reports and presentations to Cabinet, the Health and Wellbeing Board, Children's Improvement Board, Local Safeguarding Children Board, Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Trust, involving the views of children and young people.
- 4.3. Discussions are currently underway with Ofsted around holding an improvement planning seminar with them to better understand their findings and the best possible responses to these; the plan will be amended, as appropriate.
- 4.4. The local authority is required to submit an action plan to address Ofsted's recommendations to the Department for Education and Ofsted by 22 December 2015. The current draft Children and Young People's Improvement Plan is attached at Appendix 1. The action plan is at Appendix 2 and sets out the proposed actions to address each recommendation, along with the impact measures that will be used to scrutinise and challenge progress in these areas.
- 4.5. There are a number of supporting documents to the improvement plan, set out below, and these are available on request:
 - Quality Assurance Framework
 - Stakeholder Engagement
 - Risk Register
 - Core Training Offer for Social Workers and Managers
 - Ofsted recommendations from the Inspection in July 2015
 - Ofsted recommendations from the Inspection in March 2013 and Improvement Notice Actions

5. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

- 5.1. The Children and Young People's Improvement Plan affects a small percentage of children and young people across all areas of Cheshire East, but these are our most vulnerable.

6. Implications of Recommendation

6.1. Policy Implications

- 6.1.1. The new improvement plan will impact on some existing policies and procedures of the Council as a number of these will be reviewed in relation to improving practice, for example those around the recruitment and retention of Social Workers.

- 6.1.2. A focus on working in partnership around early intervention and prevention is key to reduce future need and improve outcomes for young people, in particular around reducing the number of vulnerable young people who are not in education, employment or training.

6.2. Legal Implications

- 6.2.1. Cheshire East is currently under a notice to improve. The decision to lift this notice sits with the Secretary of State based on advice from DfE officials and Chair of the Improvement Board. Until a decision is made, the existing Improvement Board will continue to operate.

6.3. Financial Implications

- 6.3.1. The ambition to ensure that children's services deliver services which are good and outstanding requires an ongoing financial commitment from the Council. In addition, it is important to note that improvements in safeguarding practice have resulted in an increase in the number of children in care. This has significant current and future financial implications for the Council.

6.4. Equality Implications

- 6.4.1. The improvement plan is expected to improve outcomes for the Borough's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people and their families.

6.5. Rural Community Implications

- 6.5.1. None identified at this stage.

6.6. Human Resources Implications

- 6.6.1. The recruitment and retention of high quality Social Workers and managers will continue to be a challenge for the local authority and will require the support from HR colleagues to deliver the strategy in relation to this.

6.7. Public Health Implications

- 6.7.1. The improvement plan will support positive public health outcomes.

6.8. Other Implications

- 6.8.1. None.

7. Risk Management

7.1. The Improvement Plan has a risk register that includes three key risks;

- The recruitment and retention of Social Workers and Practice Managers
- Partnership engagement and pace of improvement; and
- Managing the increased demand for services

7.2. Children's social care service delivery remains an area of high risk both in terms of reputation and costs. The recruitment and retention of high quality Social Workers and front line managers remains a risk on the corporate risk register.

8. Access to Information/Bibliography

8.1. Cheshire East's Ofsted Inspection Report is available on the website <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/cheshire-east>

9. Contact Information

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