

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 27 June 2016

Report of: Kath O'Dwyer, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director - People

Subject/Title: Children and Young People's Improvement Plan – Quarter 4 Update

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Liz Durham

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report updates the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Children and Young People's Improvement 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 update on progress and performance against the improvement plan set out at Appendix 1 and 2, respectively; and
 - b) Endorse the next steps to sustain and embed progress, as set out in these documents.

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). The Children and Young People's Improvement Plan is a key tool to ensure that areas of improvement are addressed; Scrutiny Committee can help to provide the essential internal challenge that is needed to drive this improvement.

4. Background

- 4.1 The improvement action plan was endorsed by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2015; this was subsequently approved by the Department for Education. On 16th December 2015 Cheshire East received a letter from Sam Gyimah, MP, confirming that the improvement notice, issued to Cheshire East on 12th September 2013, had been lifted. This means that the Improvement Board, that was the accountable body for the previous improvement plan, has been disbanded and this responsibility has

passed to the Health and Wellbeing Board. As the accountable body, the Health and Wellbeing Board will receive regular updates on progress against the improvement plan; the first update was received in May 2016.

- 4.2 Cabinet agreed that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee would provide oversight of delivery against the improvement plan. It is important therefore, that the Committee is kept up to date on progress against the plan. Appendix 1 summarises activity to date and proposed next steps against each Ofsted recommendation. Appendix 2 sets out the key quantitative (how much we did) and qualitative (how well we did it) measures to assess impact of the plan.
- 4.3 Progress against the plan is set out under the four key objectives below.
- Embedding listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people throughout services
 - Ensuring frontline practice is consistently good, effective and outcome focused
 - Improving senior management oversight of the impact of services on children and young people
 - Ensuring the partnership effectively protects and ensures good outcomes for all children and young people in Cheshire East
- 4.4 In summary, whilst significant activity has taken place since Ofsted's inspection of children's services to address their recommendations, further improvement is still needed in most areas to ensure services reach the 'good' level achieved by the Adoption Service.
- 4.5 Good progress continues to be made around the recruitment and retention of quality Social Workers, which is key to good practice. There are also many other examples of good practice, but the challenge is to ensure that there is consistently good practice for all children and young people. Working together as a partnership to safeguard children is a key factor. Whilst evidence suggests that it can take a significant period for inadequate authorities to get to good; of the 17 local authorities judged inadequate in the same year as Cheshire East, only one that became inadequate for the first time is currently judged as good by Ofsted (a small London borough authority).
- 4.6 There are some areas of performance where data is not currently available or less reliable due to the system and work is underway to address this or to look at alternatives.

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 improvement plan impacts 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's 'notice to improve' was lifted in December 2015. This means that the Improvement Board, that was the accountable body for the previous improvement plan, has been disbanded and this responsibility has passed to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

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. These are regularly monitored and updated through improvement challenge sessions.

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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