

# Report of the Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 11 March 2019

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## **Subject:**

**PROGRESS UPDATE FOLLOWING THE OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILAC)**

## **Summary statement:**

To provide the panel with a progress update in respect of improvements identified within the Improvement Plan following the recent OFSTED inspection September 2018 and subsequent DFE notice to improve issued on the 4 December 2018.

More specifically the report will focus on changes and improvements within Workstream 2 of the Improvement Plan – Partnerships namely:

- The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- Front Door Service

In addition, the report will provide panel with a general update relating to:

- The structure and governance around the Improvement Board including Improvement Plan, and
- OFSTED's first monitoring visit.

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## **Portfolio:**

**Children and Families**

## **Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

**Children Services**

## 1. SUMMARY

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1.2 More specifically the report will focus on changes and improvements within Workstream 2 of the Improvement Plan – Partnerships namely:

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1.3 In addition, the report will provide panel with a general update relating to:

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- OFSTED's first monitoring visit.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 An Improvement Notice was issued to Bradford Council on the 4 December 2018, following the judgement that children's social care services were inadequate, as identified in the OFSTED inspection report published on the 29 October 2018.

2.2 As a consequence the Secretary of State chose to appoint an advisor to provide advice to the Department and/or the council, with the expectations that the Council will work with the advisor until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.

2.3 The Independent Chair of the Improvement Board appointed to Bradford by the DfE is Mr Stuart Smith, who was a former Director of Children's Services for Calderdale Council.

2.4 Mr Smith will oversee implementation of the improvement plan and report on progress against the objectives in the plan, to a timetable agreed with the Department.

2.5 Following the Inspection and subsequent notice to improve a number of actions have been identified to support and enable the Council to deliver safer and effective services to children/young people and their families.

### 2.6 Overall General Improvement:

1. The establishment of an Integrated Improvement board with Partner's to drive the recommendations of OFSTED and from the DfE. Of note there are two boards comprising of a Strategic Improvement Board, chaired by Stuart Smith that includes external members from the DfE and LGA, together with Senior Leaders from the Council and partner agencies. The second board is an Operational Board, made up of senior manager's from across Children's Services and Corporate Resources, together with key partner agencies and the board manager from the children's safeguarding board.

2. The development of an integrated improvement plan.
3. Additional capacity to support the improvement journey, including external programme management support, commissioned by the Strategic Director of Resources to further develop the programme management of the improvement plan, governance and functionality of the two respective boards.
4. A Back to Basic's programme for all children's social care staff, is being developed focusing on what good looks like in terms of case recording, voice of the child, analysis of risk within assessments; undertaking home visits and use of supervision.
5. Review and refresh of the social work job role, with a view to achieving an increase in grade to support retention of staff in a competitive market.
6. Reducing social work caseloads to a more appropriate level of 20 for experienced social workers and 17 for newly qualified. It is important to note that in order to achieve this target, there will be a redistribution of work across the services, together with a target recruitment programme to achieve a permanent albeit mixed level of skill workforce.
7. Quality Assurance through audits is beginning to show some green shoots of improvement in casework, albeit there are still challenges around consistency and quality of practice for too many teams still.
8. Development of a robust data set that supports services in understanding performance and evidences the improvement journey.
9. A Social Work Health Check has been completed with some positive results including social workers stating they find their teams to be supportive, they liked the flexible working arrangements that Bradford offer and they had easy access to training and development. Whilst areas they would like to see improve centered around reduction in case loads, stability with the teams, retention of experienced staff and more opportunities to spend face to face time with children and young people.
10. OFSTED are scheduled to complete their first monitoring visit on the 6 – 7 March, where they will specifically focus on the front door and MASH.

## 2.7 **Workstream 2 – Partnerships progress/improvement update:**

In addition to the above there have been a number of specific improvements in respect of the MASH and front door services including:

- Multi agency review of the consent policy and thresholds. OFSTED identified that sometimes we were not compliant with national guidance when sharing information and acting on referrals. The safeguarding sub group has worked with the improvement consultant to go back to basics and develop a revised consent policy and redraft of the thresholds document.
- In order to test out the new draft policies a series of multi agency workshops have been arranged commencing on Tuesday 26 February. The workshops will allow practitioners from partner agencies to test out the new documents

using case studies with a view to achieving a greater consensus and understanding across the partnership.

- There have been some internal changes to the front door and MASH, including a social worker now being based at the Contact centre that screens all calls coming in. In order to achieve this, a decision was made to redirect the current five email boxes where contact and referrals come into and four telephone lines into two each respectively. This allows and assists the social worker in monitoring just two email boxes.
- All information and advice sought is now recorded on a case file. Families are informed/advised where consent has not been sought that Children's Social Care holds case records in respect of their children.
- Section 47 safeguarding strategy meetings have now moved to the locality teams, this is where there are concerns/risk about a child and agencies through the MASH share key information in order to assess risk and consider whether a child should be made subject to a child protection plan. By moving the S47's to locality provides greater continuity in the case management, through timely allocation of a social worker, thereby reducing the 'handoffs' across service areas.
- Regular supervision is now in place with processes for tracking to ensure supervision remains a priority to support staff.
- A Multi agency Mock Inspection was undertaken involving senior leaders from the police, health and social care, inspection was to test out improvements, including assurance that the service is safe, in addition to supporting staff in their confidence when faced with an external inspection.
- A peer review was completed in December 2018 undertaken by Doncaster Council, this review identified further recommendations all of which have been put into a priority action plan for the interim HOS and Service Manager to focus on.
- Following the peer review, Doncaster has continued to support Bradford, through a secondment opportunity of a highly experienced Assistant Director of Social Care - Anne Chester-Walsh.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The central theme of the Improvement Plan is the Voice of the Child, in order to achieve this, it is important to engage with some of our existing young people groups such as the Children in Care Council and Youth Voice. It is anticipated that over the next month arrangements will be made for the Strategic Director of Children's Services and members of her leadership team to meet with Youth Voice and also the Children in Care Council, to share and gain feedback around the OFSTED findings, the improvement plan and what they believe needs to happen.

### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 As previously indicated additional resources have been secured to support the

improvement journey, including additional Social Workers to help reduce the demand and manage down the caseloads.

4.2 A business paper from the service has been submitted to Council for a permanent increase in Social Workers, enabling the current structure of the service to expand from 3 locality areas to four.

4.3 Interim Programme management support has been commissioned by the Strategic Director of resources, together with an improvement consultant, and seconded senior leader from Doncaster.

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

5.1 None.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

6.1 None.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

None.

### **7.2. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

None.

### **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

None.

### **7.6 TRADE UNION**

Ongoing consultation with the trade unions around social work grade uplift and case loads continue between senior leaders within the service and trade union representatives.

### **7.7 WARD IMPLICATION**

The Improvement Notice and Improvement Plan affect all Wards, due to the Inadequate Judgement.

## **7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

In addition to the above improvements around the front door, further areas of improvement are also necessary, including services to children in care, subject to permanency plans, our fostering and residential services and children leaving care all of which sits under Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

The Improvement Plan should therefore be seen as an opportunity to review our Corporate Parenting across all services, the governance/structure of the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Pledge and Children in Care Council to ensure we are compliant and fulfilling our Corporate Parenting duties, Namely:

When a child comes into care, the council becomes the Corporate Parent. Put simply, the term 'Corporate Parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us.

A child in the care of the council looks to the council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child.

Every good parent wants the best for their child, to see their child flourish with good health, to be safe and happy, to do well at school and enjoy good relationships with their peers. To make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives and make their way as adults in higher education, in good careers and jobs, and to be financially secure.

Consequently, in considering the above statement, how do we believe our children/young people from the Children in Care Council if we were to ask how well do we:

- Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of our children and young people.
- Encourage our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- Take into account the views, wishes and feelings of our children and young people.
- Help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for our children and young people.
- For our children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

## **7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

None; both the Notice to improve and OFSTED report have been published on their respective websites and are therefore in the public domain.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

8.1 None.

## **9. OPTIONS**

9.1 Not applicable.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 Note the contents of this report.

10.2 Note the latest Improvement Plan.

10.3 Consider a review of the corporate parenting offer.

10.4 Provide critical comments and challenge where needed.

## **11. APPENDICES**

11.1 Appendix 1: Improvement Plan.

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

12.1 OFSTED Inspection report.

12.2 DfE Statutory Notice to Improve.