



# **Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 2 December 2020**

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**AN**

**Subject:**

**Children's Services Improvement Programme**

**Summary statement:**

The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Committee with a progress update on elements of Children's Services Improvement Plan.

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**Portfolio:**

**Children & Families**

**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

**Children's Services**

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This summary report will provide members with an update against some elements of the improvement plan; however Members are requested to read this summary alongside the Improvement Plan and the Self-Assessment. Officers will be available to answer any questions pertaining to this summary, the self-assessment or the improvement plan.

## **2. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **2.1 Key areas of progress:**

#### **2.1.1 Social work documents:**

The following new LCS Templates have been launched since September:

- Case Supervision
- Single Assessment
- CIC Care Plan
- CIN Plan and Review
- CP Plan and Core Group

The launch of these social work documents is a key millstone in our improvement journey because these documents are now compliant with Regulations and will allow social workers to be better able to demonstrate their good practice.

#### **2.1.2 Recruitment to key roles:**

- Practice Supervisor role:

The practice supervisor role is a new role that was established in July 2020 and recruited to. We have successfully recruited to the Practice Supervisor role ensuring we have 1 in each locality team. The objective for these practitioners is to take the lead on promoting learning and development with individuals and their teams as a whole. For example, focusing on SMART planning which has been identified as an area of improvement and ensuring that there are clear objectives set when reviewing plans for children. The following demonstrates some of the work Practice Supervisors have started to lead on:

- ▶ Improving quality of written and practical work with social workers – quality assuring work and making recommendations for improvement before it arrives with the team manager, which makes managers use of time more efficient.
- ▶ Supporting consistency in practice within teams, particularly with embedding the new forms.
- ▶ Dip sampling work i.e. quality of visits and recording, holding 1:1 sessions with workers to feedback strengths and areas of improvement and then auditing to measure the impact of the support.
- ▶ Holding in house workshops focusing on area's of practice aligned with the Practice standards to embed them across the service (they have

- timetabled these in over an 8 week period addressing areas such as case recording, analysis, direct work)
- ▶ Supporting in chairing CIN meetings, to refocus plans and avoid drift with clearer exit strategies.
- ▶ Supporting less experience staff and ASYE's

We recognise the impact of practice supervisors both in terms of staff health & well-being as well as improve quality of practice. Below is a comment from an ASYE highlighting the impact of the practice supervisor roles:

*"Gill is just amazing and given the current situation with working from home it has been reassuring that I can genuinely pick up the phone and she is there. Gill never lets you feel like you are pestering her, no matter how many times you call her and that's really important to me and I am sure other ASYEs and students as you feel like you don't want to be constantly pestering someone.*

*Gill lets you offload and will very calmly guide you and give you the advice you need. Her calm collected response just reassures you that you're not alone although whilst working from home it may feel like that at times. Gill is like my Fairy Godmother and with her support I have learnt to have more confidence in my abilities and I can talk to her about where I need to develop"*

- Community Resource Worker (CRW) role:

This is another new role we have invested in. The CRW role this has be used creatively within teams to engage families and children, CRW's are non-case holding and have more time to work with parents and children to achieve better outcomes with less delay. All work is completed under the direction of the allocated social workers and practise supervisors. They also undertake a number of tasks for social workers such as supporting with finance, housing applications with families as an example of freeing up social work time to deal with emergency issues for children and the plethora of reports and meetings that are essential within the role of a qualified social worker.

- Early Help Coordinators:

The appointment of 12 Early Help Coordinators in each of Bradford's Locality Hubs is aimed at families benefiting from timely and local early help.

- ▶ We know our Engagement Strategy is working because we have supported schools 1,160 times since 1 June. We have supported schools with 316 different cases giving advice at tier 2 for emerging needs.
- ▶ We know we are making a difference because our information on the role of EHC and LP on Bradford schools on line has been visited 2,254 since the 1<sup>st</sup> September to 21<sup>st</sup> October. Early impact:

*"The support you have given me as DSL has been superb, you have been on the end of the phone to answer any queries or provide clarification on specific issues, you have also been into school which has been really useful - to have a face to the voice on the phone helps to develop a strong professional relationship. Having someone to talk through concerns and help with*

*signposting has been extremely valuable to me, particularly during this difficult time. I really value your support.”*

(Vice Principal, BPL Academy)

### **2.1.3 Discharge of Care Orders (RF)**

As of November 2020 there are 374 children subject to a care order either placed with their parents (111 children) or placed with family and friends carers (263 children).

Social workers are actively updating assessments to identify those children where applications can be made to the court to discharge to care orders

In total there are currently 44 children subject to a Care Order whose cases have been or are being progressed through to discharge. There has been a total of 26 children discharged from care orders since April 2020.

In addition, the permanence trackers are being reviewed monthly to identify those children who can be progressed to discharge the Care Order within the next few months.

During the pandemic these cases were not being promptly listed by the court as they were not considered to be urgent. The court is now listing these cases more quickly but listing them with longer first hearing dates. The purpose is to allow Cafcass to complete their enquiries so that where possible cases can be discharged and completed at that first hearing. This is considered to be the most effective use of court time and prevents the court having to relist cases.

Overall, whilst progress continues to be made against the improvement plan and evidenced within the Self-Assessment there do remain challenges in respect of stabilising the workforce and making video conferencing facilities available to promote online learning for staff.

## **3. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 3.1 There are no financial issues beyond the additional social work resources that have already been secured to assist in the improvement journey. Any additional support required will be picked up and supported via the Enablers Programme.

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

- 4.1 Risks in relation to improvement are being picked up and managed through the Improvement Programme governance framework.

## **5. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 5.1 Not applicable.

## **6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Not applicable.

### **6.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **6.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

Not applicable.

### **6.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **6.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

Not applicable.

### **6.6 TRADE UNION**

Not applicable.

### **6.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

The Ofsted judgement affects all wards.

## **6.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

All improvements across Children's Services will strengthen the council's ability to discharge its Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

### **6.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

None; the Ofsted report and Notice of Improvement are in the public domain.

## **7. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

### **7.1**

None.

## **8. OPTIONS**

### **8.1**

None.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9.1**

That this Committee considers the contents of this report and the progress being made.

## **10. APPENDICES**

10.1 Appendix 1 - Improvement Plan.

10.2 Appendix 2 - Self-Assessment.

## **11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

11.1 None.