

Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 10th October, 2017 at 2.30 pm in
Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

Present:

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| County Councillor Geoff Driver CBE | Lancashire County Council |
| County Councillor Mrs Susie Charles | Lancashire County Council |
| County Councillor Phillippa Williamson | Lancashire County Council |
| Jane Booth | Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board |
| Richard Cooke | Lancashire County Council |
| Paul Wilcox | Voluntary Community Faith Sector |
| Louise Storey | Lancashire County Council |
| Louise Taylor | Lancashire County Council |
| Tony Crane | Independent Chair |
| Chris Coyle | Lancashire County Council |
| Natasha Wright | Lancashire County Council |
| Amanda Hatton | Lancashire County Council |
| Debbie Duffell | Lancashire County Council |
| Andy Milroy | Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council |
| Annette McNeil | Lancashire County Council |
| Victoria Gent | Lancashire County Council |
| David Graham | Lancashire County Council |
| Karen Orrell | Lancashire Care Foundation Trust |
| Fiona Harris | Lancashire County Council |

Apologies:

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| Alison Aylott | Primary Schools |
| Helen Curtis | NHS Chorley and South Ribble CCG & NHS Greater Preston CCG |
| Jan Ledward | Chief Officer - Chorley & South Ribble and Greater Preston CCG |
| Linda Clegg | Lancashire County Council |
| Stephen Cox | Secondary Schools |
| Jo Turton | Lancashire County Council |
| Danielle Holcroft | Lancashire County Council |
| Bridgett Welch | Lancashire Care Foundation Trust |
| Ian Whitehead | Lancashire Constabulary |

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, Tony Crane, welcomed all to the meeting. Roundtable introductions were made. Apologies for absence were presented from Ian Whitehead, Jo Turton, Stephen Cox, Amanda Barbour and Alison Aylott. It was noted that County Councillor Phillippa Williamson, Lead Member for Young People, Lancashire County Council was attending the meeting as an Observer.

2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

Resolved: The minutes of the last meeting held on 12th September 2017 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

With regard to Item 6 – Management Development / Support and liaising with local Universities Louise Storey reported that the County Council's Learning and Development Team had begun scoping putting together a bespoke package, it was anticipated that the Social Worker Academy would be ready for roll out in January 2018 with a further update to be provided at the November 2017 Improvement Board meeting.

With regard to Item 9 – Information Sharing Agreement Jane Booth confirmed a draft agreement has been circulated for sign off and that a further update will be provided at the next Board meeting.

3. Looked After Children

Vickey Gent and Annette McNeil presented a report (circulated) which provided the Board with an update on Looked After Children, including recent patterns and trends for children coming into care with recommended actions and a timeframe to improve performance.

The report provided analysis of the current data, highlighting that three areas – Burnley, Pendle and Preston continue to have rates above all comparators.

The Board noted a new Lancashire CLA Sufficiency Strategy for 2017 – 2020 presented at Appendix 'A' to the report. It was noted that the Strategy was being presented to the County Council's Cabinet on 12th October 2017 for approval.

It was highlighted that it is an overall County Council priority, working with partners, to reduce the numbers of children in care. The aim over the next three years is to reduce the levels of Children Looked After to 1646, a rate of 66.7 per 10,000 of the Children and Young People population.

In addition, it was highlighted how this will be achieved by:

- Embedding a risk sensible approach across the Children's Social Care workforce.
- Providing an effective prevention and early help offer through the County Council's Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service.
- Developing respite provision for children and young people on the edge of care and expanding the outreach provision, in line with best practice in Blackburn and Darwen.
- Ensuring that all new Section 20 Agreements (where there are not child protection concerns) are only accepted after families have accessed the above offers, and;
- By rigorously enforcing the Section 20 Charging Policy.

Resolved: The Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board noted the report presented, and approved the approach to be taken with regard reducing the number of Children Looked After in Lancashire over the next three year period.

4. Operational Improvement Group

Chris Coyle, Children's Social Care Senior Manager, Lancashire County Council provide an update from the most recent Operational Improvement Group meeting.

It was reported that in East Lancashire, workloads are more settled. The additional staffing resource is helping to improve the situation and allow managers to focus on managing specific work areas effectively.

North Lancashire remains challenging. Central Lancashire is operating ok and workloads remain consistent.

Work is underway to look at the next 12 week improvement plan / health check. The audit process is underway which should help to identify any recurring themes or areas to focus on.

A review of systems has taken place which has identified duplication on systems, work is being done to reduce this.

County Councillor Susie Charles, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools reported that she had undertaken visits to Lancaster and Fleetwood and that staff morale was reported as good.

Resolved: The Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board noted the update from the Operational Improvement Group.

5. DfE Site Visits

Tony Crane, Independent Chair, provided an update on DfE Site Visits. It was reported that half day DfE Site Visits had taken place in Preston, Chorley, Rossendale and Accrington. This entailed speaking to managers and front line workers. Feedback received from staff was that workloads were tough but manageable.

Feedback regarding partnership relationships was positive. Progress was being made in East and Central Lancashire against priorities and targets. Resilience of central decision making still needs improvement with additional management oversight. It was felt that the service was just reaching to point where partnerships are stress tested.

An area for improvement remains linking early help support. A new action plan for North Lancashire is required.

Resolved: The Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board noted the update and actions for further improvement.

6. DCS Progress and update

Amanda Hatton, Director of Children's Services, Lancashire County Council presented a report (circulated) which provided a DCS Progress Update including an updated Continuous Improvement Plan, Assessment Timeliness, August Performance and Peer Review – Case Records Review.

It was reported that Ofsted had reviewed the Continuous Improvement Plan and endorsed the approach, further feedback was provided stating that Ofsted want more about outcomes for children, to understand the phasing of the plan and they want to see the link to what has been completed through the original Improvement Plan.

With regard to Assessment Timeliness the key findings were:

- A longer term trend of considerable improvement (Jan 16 – 40% of assessments not completed in 45 days, August 2017 – 21%).
- Jan-Aug 2017 had shown a steady rise in the number not completed in 45 days.
- Lancashire compares favourably with other authorities in the region.
- Assessments for current LAC are more likely to be overdue.
- The North has struggled with assessment rates and this can be correlated directly to the staffing issues there.

In terms of what is being done in response to these findings it was reported that:

- The 0-15 day assessment team is still in place and is performing well.
- Expectations are being clarified for staff and support managers to use live data to drive improved performance.
- Work is being done with young people to articulate the link between the timeliness of practice and better outcomes.

With regard to August Performance a number of positives were reported as follows:

- Referral rate – consistently good (31.2 per 10,000).
- Caseloads – very slight increase but still good (only 13 social workers have more than 30 cases).
- CLA numbers continue to rise – but September data show a net loss in East and North (-5 children).
- Audit – provisional August numbers, 11% inadequate.

Following an audit in August it was reported that Lancashire Children's Social Care Services has reduced the number of areas rated 'inadequate' to 11% with a greater number of service areas now rated 'requires improvement' at 74% with the number of service areas now rated 'good' at 15%.

The next areas to focus on to improve were reported as follows:

- Supervision – down to 60%, is this because of staff taking holidays? If so would expect an increase in September.
- Contact to referral conversion rate – down to 29.8%

- Assessments that led to no further action – 25%
- 1923 CLA – but East and North Lancashire have made in roads.
- Nearly 19% of Children Looked After placed with parents.

With regard to Peer Review – case records review it was reported that 8 cases had been reviewed with feedback received as follows:

- No children were deemed unsafe and there was evidence of good timely action.
- Immediate risks are addressed.
- Staff know the children well that they are working with.
- Staff morale is good and staff appear well motivated in terms of our improvement journey.
- Staff feel supported and most felt Lancashire had a positive learning culture.
- Staff reported positive changes since our inspection in 2015.

The following issues were also highlighted as part of the case records review:

- The role of Family Support Workers - in some cases there were multiple workers and it wasn't clear who was doing what.
- The arrangements in respect of early help – step-down, how this works and are cases held at the right level.
- Multi-agency involvement in strategy meetings – although where there hadn't been multi-agency attendance he could see follow up and info sharing with professionals after the strategy meeting.

Resolved: The Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board

- (i) Approved the approach contained within the Continuous Improvement Plan, and
- (ii) Requested that the next Plan focuses on activities in North Lancashire.

7. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

David Graham, Head of Service and Fiona Harris Senior Manager (both Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Service, Lancashire County Council) gave a presentation regarding the Lancashire SEND Graduated Response.

It was highlighted that the SEND 'Local Offer' brings together a directory of information and services that support children and young people aged -25 and their families. The 'Local Offer' consists of four levels. At level one the Child or Young Person's needs are met by universal services for example school, GP's health visitors, school nurses or independent and voluntary services. No formal assessment is necessary for this support.

Level two consists of additional targeted guidance and support for the Child or Young Person and their families to access services through Lancashire's Local Offer and includes access to Pupil Premium Plus funding.

Level three consists of a higher level of unmet needs which requires a specialist, co-ordinated approach. The Child or Young Person is supported by SEND services following assessment by a local multi-agency panel.

Level four requires support for increasing complex, severe or life-threatening needs, there may also be safeguarding concerns and the Child or Young Person requires multi-agency responses from Children's Social Care Services.

The Board sought clarification of the number of Children or Young People that currently have Statements of Special Educational Needs and how many remain that are yet to transfer over to Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP's). It was confirmed there are still around 1450 Children or Young People in Lancashire that remain to transfer but monthly transfer targets are being exceeded.

Resolved: The Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board noted the presentation regarding Lancashire's SEND Graduated Response.

8. Workforce - principles, model and progress

Amanda Hatton presented a report (circulated) regarding the Children's Social Care Workforce Position Statement.

It was reported that the statement set out the existing capacity and structures and how these have been enhanced following the Ofsted judgement and the proposed future requirements moving forwards.

The following underpinning principles for Children's Social Care in Lancashire were presented to the Board:

- Children's social care is delivered across three localities – North, Central and East.
- The management structure in all teams is consistent and comprises senior managers, team managers and practice managers.
- All Child Protection and Children Looked After cases are held by social workers.
- Child in Need cases that are considered complex (a clear definition is in place) are being held by social workers.
- All other Child in Need cases are held by Family Support Workers with management oversight from social workers.
- Teams are focussed around specialist functions – Assessment and Safeguarding (includes assessment, Child in Need and Child Protection) Children in Our Care (Children Looked After), Personal Professional Advisor hubs (Care Leavers) and Child Sexual Exploitation
- The Risk Sensible Model has been adopted and training and support to implement this approach has been rolled out across children's social care as well as other parts of children's services. The Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board is now rolling out the model across multi agency partners.

As part of the County Council's improvement journey additional capacity has been agreed and resourced with the total number of staff currently employed in Children's Social Care as at the end of August 2017 standing at 570.3 Full Time Equivalent posts. This compares to 468.5 FTE posts as at August 2015.

In addition several new ways of working were highlighted, including a new Practice Improvement Model, A Child Sexual Exploitation team, new ways of dealing with care proceedings, a 'front door' restructure including the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and the Contact and Referral Team to provide a single point of contact and a review of management roles and responsibilities.

Resolved: The Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board noted the report and supported the agreed principles for the Social Care Workforce.

9. Any other business

Natasha Wright informed the Board that as it was Care Leavers week that a campaign entitled 'Sincerely You' was being organised and that a press release was being produced. The Board supported this campaign and agreed to circulate accordingly.

As it was the last meeting for officers Richard Cooke and Louise Storey, the Independent Chair, Tony Crane, thanked both officers for their service and wished them well in their future roles.