

## **Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board**

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**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 27th March, 2018 at 1.15 pm in Committee Room 'B' (The Diamond Jubilee Room) - County Hall, Preston**

### **Present:**

Tony Crane	Independent Chairman
Peter Dwyer	Future Independent Chairman
County Councillor Geoff Driver CBE	Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Mrs Susie Charles	Lancashire County Council
Jane Booth	Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board
Paul Wilcox	Voluntary Community Faith Sector
Stephen Cox	Secondary Schools
Chris Coyle	Lancashire County Council
Natasha Wright	Lancashire County Council
Debbie Duffell	Lancashire County Council
Ian Whitehead	Lancashire Constabulary
Louise Burton	NHS Safeguarding
Angie Ridgwell	Lancashire County Council
John Readman	Lancashire County Council
Hazel Gregory	Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust
Sally Allen	Lancashire County Council
Dr Sakthi Karunanithi	Lancashire County Council
Andy Milroy	Senior Democratic Services Officer, LCC
Josephine Lee	Lancashire County Council
Grant Murdoch	Children's Services Programme Manager, LCC
Victoria Gent	Head of Service – Children's Social Care, LCC

### **Apologies:**

Alison Aylott	Primary Schools
Bridgett Welch	Lancashire Care Foundation Trust
Amanda Hatton	Lancashire County Council
Simon Fisher	Lancashire County Council
Stephen Belbin	Lancashire County Council

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman, Tony Crane, welcomed all to the meeting. Roundtable introductions were made. Apologies for absence were noted from Bridgett Welch, Amanda Hatton, Alison Aylott and Stephen Cox. It was also noted that Paul Wilcox would be late.

### **2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting**

**Resolved:** The minutes of the Lancashire Children's Services Board meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018 were approved as an accurate record.

## **Action Log Updates**

**Item 1** – With regard to the outcomes of the CQC inspections it was noted that Bridgette Welch will provide an update to a future meeting of the Board – to be determined in the Action Log.

**Item 2** – List of Acronyms Document – it was reported by John Readman that the document had been prepared and would be circulated to Board members as soon as possible after the meeting.

**Item 3** – Children in Need Step Down Update – Debbie Duffell reported that this action needs to be scheduled as an item for a future Board meeting to be determined.

**Item 4** – Early help pathways and referral rates from Police – Debbie Duffell reported that this action needs to be scheduled as an item for a future Board meeting to be determined.

**Item 5** – MASH Feedback – It was noted this was included as an agenda item for this Board meeting.

**Item 6** – Purposeful Practice Board (PPB) Work Programme – It was noted that an update from the PPB was included as part of the Director of Children's Services Progress Update Presentation. With regard to targets for the next three months being presented to the Board and selecting one target for PPB to focus on, this action was carried over to the next Board meeting.

**Item 7** – Strategy Discussions that include Police, Health and Education – it was noted that this item was on the agenda for this Board meeting.

**Item 8** – Supervision Figures need to improve from 70% to over 90% - it was noted that this item was on the agenda for this Board meeting.

**Item 9** – SEND Recovery Plan – It was noted that this Plan was due to be signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board, then signed off by the Department for Education. It will then be submitted to the Improvement Board at its April meeting.

**Item 10** – Early help – Step Up and Step Down Update – it was noted that this item was included on the agenda as part of the Director of Children's Services – Progress and Update.

**Item 11** – Early Help Pathways – It was reported that this was a work in progress, cross partner discussions have taken place, a further meeting between partners is scheduled to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018, it is anticipated that a further update will be provided to the Improvement Board at its April meeting.

**Items 12 – 15** – All related to Ofsted Preparations – it was noted that Ofsted Preparation was included on this agenda under several items, including the workshop item.

**Item 16** – Improvement Board Reporting – it was noted that this item was included on this agenda.

**Items 17 and 18** – Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Matters – it was reported that the LSCB had gone back to look at findings and it was determined that there were no patterns to distinguish a locality difference in strategy discussions, it was found there was consistency across the County.

### **3. Director of Children's Services - Progress and Update**

John Readman, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council, introduced a presentation containing the Director of Children's Services Progress Update.

The update included progress towards improvement. It was reported that preparations were continuing towards the formal Ofsted visit.

The final Ofsted Monitoring Visit for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had taken place on 27 and 28 February 2018, with a letter received from Ofsted reporting their findings circulated to the Board. Overall the letter highlighted that the MASH was improving and was moving in the right direction.

Updates were provided on three work areas as follows:

#### **Workforce Strategy**

It was reported that at the last meeting the key initiatives were presented – Recruitment and Retention, Social Work Academy, Leadership Academy and Health and Wellbeing.

- A drive is on with regard to recruitment and retention.
- The Social Work Academy is now up and running.
- The Leadership Academy is in operation, with courses now taking place.
- Student events are being arranged, with good responses from students at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) - over 25 students expressing an interest in becoming a Lancashire Social Worker.
- Links are being created within Health and Wellbeing.

It was reported that the level of Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Social Workers had decreased with Social Workers now having greater experience levels and retention levels increasing. Staff are committed to providing a good service.

With regard to workloads there are fluctuations in the Central Lancashire areas.

#### **Purposeful Practice**

It was reported that the last meeting of the Purposeful Practice Board (PPB) was positive with front line Social Workers present. Partners from Heath are on board and collaborative working is taking place.

Chris Coyle confirmed work has been done in Districts with the longest serving Social Workers with regard to enhancing the "Child's Voice" in Assessment Plans in line with Ofsted recommendations.

Board Members discussed an audit of non-accidental injury causes and how it suggests a more limited understanding of health economy and how this can be linked together.

## **Permanence**

Sally Allen reported that a Children in Our Care and Care Leavers Strategy will be drafted by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018, following this it will be submitted to the Board for approval.

The PROUD Awards took place since the last Board meeting, the awards recognise and reward our children and young people who are looked after or have just left our care. It was reported that the event was very well received.

The Care Leavers offer continues to be reviewed with a strategy being developed. It was noted that there is an existing offer out there for care leavers but it needs to be documented.

## **Monthly Update on Performance**

With regard to performance the following Strengths / Challenges were reported to the Board.

### **Strengths**

Caseloads overall remain low and manageable. The number of agency Social Workers is 9.1% as at February 2018.

With regard to assessments and strategy discussions - 2.10% of child and family assessments are completed between 0 and 15 days (29.3%) increased on the previous month and now rated Outstanding. 1.5% of assessments that led to no further action remain low and rated Outstanding (18.5%).

With regard to Audits / Caseloads Performance Indicators 9.8, 9.9 and 9.13 – The majority of caseload average indications remain low and rated either Good / Outstanding.

### **Challenges**

With regard to Performance Indicator 9.4 - Caseloads for newly qualified Social Workers has increased on the previous month to 20.6.

Some aspects of assessment and strategy discussions remain a challenge – 2.11% of Child and Family Assessments completed over 45 days has increased to 29.8% and is still rated inadequate. The Board requested that this be prioritised for further improvement.

The percentage of the workforce with over 3 years of experience remains inadequate.

With regard to caseloads Board Members sought clarification on whether the statistics were for Full Time Equivalent staff. It was confirmed that they were. Board Members advised that there must be a balance of Quality vs Volume whilst seeking to address the time taken to complete assessments.

**Resolved:** That the Director of Children's Services – Progress and Update report be noted and that the recommendations of the Board be recorded as actions.

#### **4. Performance Information**

This item was covered during the previous item – Director of Children's Services – Progress and Update.

#### **5. Mash Monitoring Visit Action Plan**

John Readman and Sally Allen gave an update on the Mash Monitoring Visit Action Plan.

As was reported in the Director of Children's Services – Progress and Update item, the final Ofsted Monitoring Visit for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had taken place on 27 and 28 February 2018, with a letter received from Ofsted reporting their findings circulated to the Board. Overall the letter highlighted that the MASH was improving and was moving in the right direction with the following highlighted as areas that are improving / remain a challenge.

##### **What's improving:**

- Understanding of thresholds is improving, and the majority of referrals made by partner agencies other than those made by the police are appropriate and meet the threshold for children's social care.
- When children need help out of hours, this happens quickly and effectively.
- All contacts about children are passed directly to the MASH to be reviewed by qualified social workers. This is an improvement since the inspection,
- Referrals are recorded by social workers and reviewed by managers in a timely way. Thresholds are applied effectively for most children.
- Management oversight of work in the MASH is organised and ensures a timely response for the majority of work. Managers in each locality team have a good understanding of children currently being considered, and they monitor the progress of work effectively.

##### **What remains a challenge:**

- The combination of the large volume and poor quality of incident reports, and unreliable initial risk rating means that police staff at the MASH and social workers spend considerable time trying to review and prioritise this work.
- Significant numbers, approximately 70%, do not meet the threshold for social work intervention.

- The understanding of, and response to, children who are experiencing domestic abuse in their families is not well developed focusing too often on the most recent incident as opposed to a whole picture. The local authority has already identified this as a weakness and is planning to review practice in the MASH.
- Practice remains focused on the severity of the most recent incident and the actions of the victim, and the experiences of victims of abuse or their children are not sufficiently considered.
- Supervision is regular but there is little evidence that supervision is being used to develop practice or drive performance
- The staff resource to develop the revised MASH has been created with temporary funding and is currently comprised of 63% agency social workers and managers.

In terms of an Action Plan as a result of the MASH Monitoring Visit, the following key areas were highlighted as areas for focus in the coming months and will be incorporated into the Action Plan.

### **Action Plan**

- New plan focusing on quality of practice overseen by the MASH Strategic Board: -
  - Multi-agency domestic abuse training for staff in MASH
  - Holistic assessment and appropriate use of historical information
  - Revisit purpose of strategy discussions, lived experience of the child
  - Staff Supervision to develop practice and drive performance
  - Timeliness – decision making and police referrals
  - Quality of police referrals

The Board discussed "quick wins" that could potentially be focused on in the next six weeks prior to the OFSTED visit. Some of the areas to target as a priority were domestic abuse, understand the impact of it, recording referrals in a smarter way, some work on supervision, improve quality of recording, review timeliness. It was noted that the specific MASH Board was due to meet in the coming days to agree detailed priorities as a matter of urgency.

**Resolved:** The Board noted the update and the implementation of the MASH Monitoring Visit Action Plan.

## **6. Self Assessment Preparation**

### **7. Lancashire Constabulary - Update**

Ian Whitehead provided an update on behalf of Lancashire Constabulary with regard to Self Assessment Preparation.

It was reported that tracking of enquiries was down to 24 hours. Additional training has been put in place to improve the quality of reporting. Additional resources have been put into Audit / Compliance. Data recording is now improving.

Some additional support will be identified and added regarding child exploitation.

**Resolved:** The Board noted the update and Self Assessment Preparation from Lancashire Constabulary.

## **8. Progress in Health - Update**

Hazel Gregory gave a presentation on Progress in Health in relation to Self Assessment Preparation.

The current strengths of Health and Protection were highlighted, including:

- Timely response from front door to locality team.
- Skype strategy discussions with partners.
- Duty for all Practitioners
- Reduction in duplication for partners.
- Health access to LCS.
- Health hot desks in localities.
- Purpose built Centre for CP medicals

Some challenges were reported which included CLA admin are no longer able to edit information on the data system – Liquid Logic and it is also a challenge understanding wider health providers.

## **Voice of the Child**

With regard to the Voice of the Child, it was reported that feedback was obtained from Young People who advised that it was nice to speak to staff and they felt well supported. Young People felt the advice given had a big impact on their own views of hygiene and health. Some areas that concerned Young People were having assessments done at places like College.

**Resolved:** The Board noted the update with regard to progress made in Health.

## **9. Workshop - Work in Groups on preparation for OFSTED Inspection**

At this point the Board split into three workshop groups to work on preparation for the OFSTED Inspection. Information recorded in this section was collated by the Children's Services Programme Manager.

## **10. Chair's Reflection**

As it was his last meeting the Chairman, Tony Crane, offered some thoughts on his two years as Chairman of the Board. He advised that he has seen a lot of progress made in the two years from the starting point he found and Lancashire was on the right path to improvement. The conditions are being created to enable front line Social Workers to have manageable caseloads and delivery quality support to children in Lancashire. Tony welcomed his successor as Chairman, Peter Dwyer, and wished him well in his new role.

**11. Any Other Business**

Under AOB, County Councillor Geoff Driver, Leader of Lancashire County Council thanked Tony Crane for all his hard work as Chairman of the Board and stated that under his Chairmanship Lancashire has come a long way and made a lot of progress. The Board endorsed these comments and wished Tony well for the future.

**12. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at 1.15pm in Committee Room 'C', County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ.