

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 10 April 2019

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Lancashire Getting to Good Plan

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

The report provides an update on the Lancashire Getting to Good Plan and the progress made.

Recommendation

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i. Note the information provided.
- ii. Consider the progress made on the six key areas.

Background and Advice

The Ofsted re-inspection of Children's Services in June 2018 noted significant improvements, with an overall effectiveness judgement of 'requires improvement' to be good, and 'good' for our adoption service. However, there is still more to do to ensure that all children receive a consistently good service. The Lancashire Getting to Good Plan sets out the actions required to address the 11 recommendations in the report, further improving the quality of practice and outcomes for children.

Progress in relation to the plan and associated performance matrix is reviewed by the Getting to Good Board every six weeks.

The plan focuses on strengthening and improving the quality of practice in 6 key areas. A brief summary in respect of progress is detailed below:

1. Effective Partnership Working

A Children's Partnership Board has been established and there is a strong commitment from partners to working collaboratively in addressing shared strategic priorities, which will be set out in a revised Children & Young Peoples Plan.

The Neglect Strategy has been updated and will be officially launched by the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board in April. An online toolkit has also been

developed to provide practitioners with guidance and practical tools when assessing the impact of neglect on the child.

Training has been delivered to schools in relation to Operation Encompass which will support timely information sharing in relation to domestic abuse incidents. This will go 'live' in April 2019.

2. Prevention

We are committed to working with partners to utilise our collective resource to secure a county-wide approach within which all partners coordinate, prioritise and maximise their efforts to achieve successful outcomes for children and families.

Early help posts have been established in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to support multi-agency use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) tool and identify appropriate early help intervention. A review is also underway looking at the family support worker (FSW) resource across children's services and how this could be utilised more effectively. This includes the role and functions of this resource, ensuring a more targeted approach to prevent the escalation of need and demand on statutory services. A new model utilising this collective resource will be piloted in Fleetwood, the findings of which will inform the wider review.

3. Purposeful Practice

A Statement of Social Work has been developed which sets out our values and principles, with clear links to the Knowledge and Skills Statement (national standards for social workers). There is a strong focus on practice and casework consistency, with an emphasis on developing more strength based approaches to working with children and families. Lancashire is hosting a Theory of Change workshop in April to explore this further with partners. Action has been taken to strengthen the critical challenge and quality assurance role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), including revised guidance, IRO learning circles and joint training of IROs and Children's Social Care managers. A more targeted approach to audit is being developed to support practitioner's understanding of good practice. Our approach to quality assurance has been strengthened by the introduction of multi-agency 'practice weeks', focused on a particular theme. This commenced in February looking at child sexual abuse. As well as undertaking multi-agency audits, focus groups and training events were held to promote learning.

4. Permanence and Corporate Parenting

An Improvement Partner is working with the service to develop practice in relation to permanence. This has included our approach to care planning, the use of pre-proceedings, legal gateway meetings, becoming looked after panels and permanence panels. Processes are being streamlined and policies and procedures have been updated to simplify them. Permanence workshops are taking place to develop practitioners understanding of permanence and a permanence tracker is now in use to track cases which will reduce drift and delay in achieving permanence for children. A review has been completed of children subject to Care Orders who

are placed with parents to identify those children where an application can be made to the court to discharge the order, achieving permanence within their birth family.

5. Effective Use of Performance Data

Whilst significant progress has been made in improving the accuracy of performance data, we need to improve the use of data so that it is an effective tool to help manager's measure progress and examine trends. North Yorkshire, as part of the Partners in Practice innovation programme have agreed to work with Lancashire in reviewing our systems and use of data.

6. Workforce Development

In order to improve the quality of practice in line with the recommendations made by Ofsted, we need to ensure we have a workforce with the right skills, support and tools to do the job and provide strong leadership. We are successfully recruiting to social work posts through our centralised recruitment panel. Whilst challenges remain in the North, a recent "open event" for Fylde and Wyre has seen positive interest and increased applications. The retention of our newly qualified social workers - ASYE (assessed and supported year in employment) improves year on year. An evaluation of the Social Work Academy confirms its key role in supporting a good induction to Lancashire and a career with us in social work. We have had an unprecedented number of applications from excellent support workers for our "Grown your Own" apprenticeship scheme with 12 children's services staff starting this year as social work students. We know that many of our students remain with Lancashire and we are increasing student numbers as part of the Teaching Partnership. The Leadership Academy has concluded its first year and provided a comprehensive package of management and leadership training to managers at all levels and we are evidencing stable management teams across all parts of children's services.

We have revised the current training offer in line with the priorities in the Getting to Good Plan, with a focus on strength based approaches, neglect and domestic abuse. We recognise the support staff require to undertake their roles and a Health and Wellbeing group is now established to focus on staff retention and building resilience in the workforce.

The government wants all social workers to be accredited by 2020 and Lancashire is now part of the National Accreditation Scheme. This commences in April and we aim to accredit up to 150 social workers over the next year. We have a plan to support and prepare staff through this process and work is now underway.

The Getting to Good Plan is supporting the continuous improvement of Children's Services, maintaining focus and pace. The plan provides a framework for the next phase of our improvement journey, in line with our ambition that we deliver consistently good services to children and families in Lancashire.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

As Children's Services are no longer judged to be inadequate, intervention by the Department for Education has now ceased. Future inspections by Ofsted will be undertaken under a new inspection framework: inspection of local authority children's services, with a strong focus on the quality and impact of social work practice. The Getting to Good Plan sets out the priorities for the next twelve months, maintaining the pace and focus on areas for improvement.

Risk management

In the absence of an improvement plan there is a risk that the recommendations made by Ofsted will not be addressed. This would impact on outcomes for children and would also present a significant inspection risk. When Children's Services are re-inspected by Ofsted under ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services), we will need to be able to evidence the action taken to address the recommendations and the impact this had in improving the quality of practice. The improvement plan ensures clear accountability with a named lead and timescale for each recommendation.

There could be significant financial implications should Children's Services be judged to be inadequate in the new Ofsted regime of the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), in which councils are inspected more regularly and on the basis of Ofsted assessed risk. This regime replaces the old Safeguarding Inspection Framework (SIF) on which Lancashire was judged previously.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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NA

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

NA