

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

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REASON FOR ITEM

This is the first report outlining the details of the Service Improvement Plan for the Policy Overview Committee. The plan gives an overview of all of the key areas of activity and details of the current stage of improvement work within Children and Young People Social Care. Within the context of the Department's overall plan, this paper sets out the key themes and challenges facing Children's Social Care in order for it to reach a good level of service by the end of this financial year. This paper gives a strategic context in which the detailed action plan priorities are set out.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

It is recommended that the Committee notes the development of the Service Improvement Plan and progress undertaken to date, and comments as appropriate on the direction of travel and pace of improvements within the service.

INFORMATION

1. In March 2015 this Committee was informed that the Ofsted Plan to address the recommendations from the previous inspection has now been concluded and that ongoing improvement work would now be transferred to the new Service Improvement Plan. In developing this plan the service has taken into consideration recent changes and developments to national policy, legislation and the report of the Chief Inspector Ofsted. In his report published in March 2015, the Chief Inspector Ofsted outlines the key characteristics of authorities judged to be good under the new inspection framework for children's social care as follows;
 - Strong leaders and managers have a relentless focus on outcomes for children
 - Social workers work directly with children and families at an early stage to prevent the need for further intervention
 - Managers and social workers have a discernible 'grip' on cases at all times
 - Managers have strong oversight of caseloads, vacancies, and a high quality of training and supervision
2. These key principles have been woven into Hillingdon's Service Improvement Plan. The plan is also designed to deliver sustainable improvements in the service through the development of good social work practice. Our vision is to ensure that every child and family who comes to our attention has:
 - Their needs and vulnerabilities assessed quickly and accurately
 - Any risks children face are quickly identified, and are reduced as a result of our involvement

- We talk to and listen to children and families through our involvement and where possible act on their concerns
 - If families need support, this is done through good social work intervention with clear and timely goals
 - If we cannot achieve positive safe change for children in their family, we offer additional specialist support and are clear about our responsibilities and their rights
 - If children cannot live safely in their family, we work with the wider family to ensure they remain within their community, and if this is not feasible we provide good quality alternative homes on a permanent basis
3. Critical to the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) will be a successful recruitment campaign for permanent staff coupled with the implementation of a flatter management structure. This will provide improved stability within the workforce and effective leadership at a practice level. The SIP will deliver a social work structure built around a model of one team manager with a maximum of 7 social workers to supervise. This will strengthen accountability of good practice within the teams and will maintain the POD business support system. This model will also invest in the advanced practitioner role to deliver enhanced practice leadership in all of the social work teams.

Children's Social Care

4. Nationally, children's social care face the challenges of continued scrutiny and higher expectations, whilst maintaining the emphasis on keeping children safe and wherever possible supporting them to remain in their families. Changes in legislation have introduced new timescales for specific aspects of support to children; including the length of care proceedings and the decisions relating to permanence for children looked after who are unable to return to their immediate family. There is also greater expectations in how well Children's Services identify, manage and support children who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), trafficking, grooming, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), gang violence and radicalisation. All of these issues are relevant to how we plan and provide the service within Hillingdon.
5. Central Government has also recently introduced new legislation which has extended the *staying put* age range for Looked After Children from 18 to 21. This has resulted in an increased number young people remaining within their foster placements until their early adult hood. The Children and Families Act 2014 and recent guidance from the DfE has also placed additional responsibilities on local authorities relating to child adoption that will mean that the Council will have to consider plans to work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities in the provision of this service.
6. Locally, children's social care also has to manage the demands from Heathrow airport because Hillingdon is the London Borough responsible for providing services to unaccompanied and asylum seeking children and young people. This group of children and young people are particularly vulnerable and often have to be brought into the care system in order to meet their needs. This presents a significant and ongoing burden because, under care leavers legislation, the Council has duties to

care for this group of young people until they are up to 25 years of age. This group of children and young people also account for the higher than normal number of teenagers within Hillingdon's Looked After Children population.

Improvement Plan

7. The Service Improvement Plan (SIP) is developed to incorporate and manage these local and national demands whilst also improving the overall quality of social work practice. The SIP provides a framework of seven work streams that will address the wide range of challenges and improvement activity required within the service. The plan's objective is to ensure that changes implemented are sustainable in the longer-term. The seven work streams are:
 1. Workforce development
 2. Improve Triage, MASH and Referral & Assessment
 3. Improving social work practice within the CSWTs
 4. Improving outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) and Young People
 5. Improving the quality of Fostering & Adoption provision
 6. Embedding new ways of working and improved practice management arrangements
 7. Effective Quality Assurance

8. Each of the work streams within the SIP is supported by a detailed action plan with clear milestones and performance targets. The action plans form the core business for the Assistant Directors and Service Managers within children's social care. The SIP will be monitored at regular intervals by the following management and corporate bodies:
 - CYPS service manager meeting (Fortnightly)
 - CYPS Senior Management Team (Monthly)
 - Children's Services Performance Monitoring Board (Monthly)
 - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services meeting (Monthly)
 - Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee (Quarterly)
 - Corporate Parenting Board (work streams 4 & 5 - 2 monthly)
 - Local Safeguarding Children's Board (work streams 2 & 3 - 2 monthly)

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

To consider the SIP and action plans and note progress undertaken to date, and comments as appropriate on the direction of travel and pace of improvements within the service.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. London Borough of Hillingdon Children's Social Care Improvement Plan 2015/16
2. Children's Social Care Improvement Action Plan 2015/16