

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 JULY 2015

UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE CHILDREN'S SAFGUARDING IMPROVEMENT NOTICE

Report from: Barbara Peacock, Director Children and Adults Services

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Summary

The report summarises progress made on the implementation of Medway's Improvement Plan, and outlines the priorities for the updated Plan which will drive improvement work across Children's Services during 2015-16. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note progress and support ongoing implementation.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Medway Council was issued with an Improvement Notice by the DFE in 2013 following a safeguarding inspection in January and a Looked After Children inspection in July, both of which rated its services as 'inadequate'.
- 1.2 The Improvement Plan lays out the actions required to meet the requirements of the Improvement Notice and the timescales by which these will be achieved. The Plan is overseen and monitored by an External Improvement Board chaired by an independent person, Jane Held, who reports regularly to the DFE.
- 1.3 Board members include representatives of key partner agencies as well as Medway Council. Councillor O'Brien attends in his capacity as portfolio holder for Children's Services.

2. Background

- 2.1 The first Improvement Plan, 'Moving on Medway', was signed off in September 2013. The Plan outlined what needed to be done by all partners to effect the necessary changes and improve the quality of services for children and families in

Medway. This was followed by a revised and updated plan, agreed by the Board in April 2014.

- 2.2 The External Board has met monthly since July 2013, and is responsible for overseeing, challenging and supporting progress in relation to implementation of the Plan. The independent chair is responsible for reporting to the DfE in order to provide confirmation of and confidence in sustained improvement within Medway.
- 2.3 The Department for Education has recently appointed a Children's Services Adviser, John Goldup, who is a member of the Improvement Board and makes regular reports to the DFE in relation to progress on the Improvement Plan.

3. Progress on implementation of the Plan

- 3.1 The Improvement Board has received quarterly reports on progress against the plan, as well as performance data and themed reports at each monthly meeting.
- 3.2 Considerable progress has been made over the last year in establishing processes to support improvement and to oversee practice, which are summarised below.
 - The re-aligned service across children's social care has led to a reduction in percentage of referrals and assessments converting from contacts and a much improved rate of assessments completed within the 45 day timescales.
 - The Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) is working alongside the CADS team, who have adopted the innovative model of practice supported by Professor David Thorpe from Lancaster University. This supports appropriate 'step up and step down' interventions.
 - The four service areas: IFSS, CADS and Assessment, Child In Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP), and Proceedings and LAC allow for fewer transition points and more continuity of service for children and families.
 - The rise in numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans has stabilised over the past six months although continues to be above national and SE region average rates. Work continues to robustly review these cases and ensure plans are progressed appropriately and children stepped down to CIN plans where safe to do so.
 - The introduction of the Strengthening Families model within child protection conferences has been welcomed by partners and families, and is supporting a 'smarter' approach to child protection planning and a more concise format for CP plans and minutes.

- Meeting timescales for convening initial CP conferences following strategy discussion remain a challenge but work has been undertaken to streamline the process, and this has resulted in recent improvements.
- The rise in numbers of cases subject to legal proceedings continues to challenge services across the council including our legal colleagues, but processes have been put in place to robustly monitor these and ensure cases are prioritised appropriately.
- An area for development is to articulate the Council's ambition for LAC more clearly and monitor progress. The LAC Strategy and the Sufficiency report have been updated.
- Adoption performance continues to be positive with the proportion of children leaving care who are adopted remaining higher than national average. The average number of days between placement order and matching remains higher than the target but this is kept under review.
- The Leaving Care service is now fully operational and work has been done with the commissioning service to review accommodation provision for this group of young people and develop a commissioning strategy. A nurse has been appointed to work specifically with young people leaving care and make sure they can access their health history.
- Access to CAMHS for all looked after children remains a challenge. The contract with Sussex Partnership to provide the CAMHS service is being robustly managed and the service is working with us to make sure we can meet the needs of this group of children and young people.
- Audit processes are evidencing that children's views, wishes and feeling are being discussed and recorded. Social workers are supported to do this, and as well as support through supervision, external training has been provided for social work staff on direct work with children.
- Medway has put in place a culture of learning and improvement, and has invited external reviewers to scrutinise practice and give feedback, as well as visiting other local authorities known to demonstrate good and outstanding practice. In addition, the chair of the Improvement Board and colleagues from the DFE have undertaken regular progress review/deep dive visits to evidence progress on the ground.
- Despite challenges in recruitment of permanent staff, Medway has a record of innovative practice and has met the target of 3 new social workers per month. Increases in demand on the service have required additional investment in posts

which mean that use of agency staff continues to be high, particularly at team manager level.

- 3.3 The Improvement Board agreed that a refocused and revised plan would be produced for 2015-16 which builds on the progress made, and establishes a vision for the next phase of improvement work, which is about sustaining progress, engaging all partners in developing a robust early help offer, with a clear focus on outcomes and impact for children and families.
- 3.4 This Plan will support transition of responsibilities to the Medway Safeguarding Children Board, who will strengthen their challenge function and revise their performance reporting framework to oversee the core safeguarding practice of all partners, including Children's Social Care.

4. Revised Improvement Plan

- 4.1 The revised plan is summarised for all partners on the attached Appendix 1 as a 'Plan on a Page'. The full version can be accessed on the Medway CAN website, or from the Improvement Programme manager sue.bruntonreed@medway.gov.uk

This plan is intended to be forward looking and ambitious, supporting continual improvement and sustainable progress.

- 4.2 The Plan maintains a focus on the key themes which have been at the core of the first two Improvement Plans dated September 2013 and April 2014. Under each theme, this revised plan outlines key outcomes and high level actions, taking into account the findings of the recent Peer Review (November 2014), findings of 'deep dive' visits by Jane Held, Chair of Improvement Board, review visits by DFE, and the Peer Review of the MSCB (February 2015).
- 4.3 The six themes are:
- Quality and Effectiveness of Service
 - Workforce and Capability
 - Performance Management
 - Early Help and partnership working
 - Leadership and Governance
 - Communication
- 4.4 Detailed actions and timescales are incorporated into all CSC Service Plans, and should be included in partners' individual agency plans for the coming year.

5. Future of External Improvement Board

- 5.1 It is proposed that the agendas for future Improvement Board meetings focus on those aspects of the plan which require ongoing improvement activity and where

the influence of the board will be most beneficial. These areas are: Early Help and services for Looked After Children.

- 5.2 The core safeguarding processes of referral, assessment, planning and review for children in need and those who are subject to child protection plans will be reported routinely to the Medway Safeguarding Children Board, in accordance with their statutory responsibilities, using their agreed dataset. Reports on these areas of work will continue to be made to the Improvement Board through a monthly dashboard and additional quarterly reports on themed topics or exception reports in response to unexpected performance or practice information which is out of line with anticipated trends.
- 5.3 This will support all agencies to build on and maintain their 'business as usual' approach, with a clearly planned and appropriate transition of responsibility for oversight and challenge to the MSCB.

6. Advice and Analysis

- 6.1 The purpose of this report is to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee members to read and discuss the progress update and note the revised and updated Improvement Plan.
- 6.2 There are no policy or structure implications.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 Failure to make required progress in relation to the Improvement Plan presents a risk to the Council in relation to future Ofsted inspection grading.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The Medway Children's Improvement Board, MSCB and Health and Well-Being Board have all had the opportunity to comment on the progress report and Improvement Plan Overview.

9. Financial and legal implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this paper other than ongoing support of the Improvement Journey.
- 9.2 Colleagues from legal services have reviewed the Plan.

10 Recommendations

- 10.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the progress made and the continued implementation of the Improvement Plan.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Phase 3 Improvement Plan on a page May 2015

Background papers

Improvement Plan 2015-2016

Phase 3 Improvement Plan on a page May 2015

A plan facilitating improvements in help, care and protection for the children of Medway

Our priorities and ambitions:

- Safe, high quality services that meet the needs of children, young people and families
- Social workers who are confident and capable professionals
- An organisational culture of learning, development and evidence based practice
- Leadership that is visible, accountable and committed to joined up service delivery, which meets needs

Moving on Medway
getting it right for every child

Theme	What we want to achieve	Our priorities for 2015-6
1 Quality and Effectiveness of practice	Children are safe, protected, risks are identified and they are provided with appropriate services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop our single front door (CADS) into a multi agency service, to include a Multi Agency Response Service for children who are on 'the edge of care' • Develop a community hub model of service delivery, with family support and social work teams closely aligned with partners working in communities • Implement and train staff on evidence based practice models • Establish a Family Drug and Alcohol Court • Fully implement our LAC Strategy and improve choice of placements • Develop a clear process for disabled children and young people to follow an enablement pathway, and receive appropriate support
2 Workforce and Capability	Staff and managers are competent, trained, supported, and the quality of their practice improves the lives of children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and embed practice standards • Provide training on evidence based models of practice • Continue an active programme of recruitment; focus on first line managers level • Promote staff retention through supervision, career development and training • Continue to develop and expand the Social Work Academy • Monitor social work caseloads to ensure they are appropriate to role and manageable
3 Performance Management	The service knows its strengths and weaknesses and can demonstrate that services for children and families have changed as a result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate and expand use of performance data at strategic and operational levels • Review the QA Framework and continue programme of audit and other QA activity • Extend recording and reporting capability to those service areas which are still not part of Framework i • Ensure every service has a plan and every staff member has a PDR
4 Partnership and Early Help	Children and families are able to access a range of interventions which respond appropriately to needs and prevent the need for more intensive interventions. Partners are signed up to supporting the Early Help strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch and implement the refreshed Early Help Strategy • Work with partners to develop the Early Help offer • Enhance capacity of CAF team and extend support for use of CAF • Procure services to address identified risk factors, including domestic abuse • Re-commission health visiting and school nursing services • Further develop a multi agency response to CSE
5 Leadership and Governance	Managers and elected members have a clear, shared vision and are able to lead and inspire their staff to deliver effective services. The MSCB hold all partners to account for their safeguarding practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-confirm shared vision with newly elected administration • Monitor and support compliance with social work standards • Strengthen challenge function of MSCB and work with the Board to take on responsibilities of Improvement Board
6 Communications	Partners and children's social care staff understand their role and specific responsibilities in delivery of the Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue regular programme of roadshows, newsletters and events • Update websites and ensure relevant information is available to staff and partners • Raise Medway's profile through 'good news' stories • Continue to promote engagement with children, young people and families