

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT BOARD

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	5 NOVEMBER 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	FIRST QUARTER REPORT - CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT BOARD		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following the establishment of the Children, Education and Early Help Services Directorate, the Administration and Managing Director drove forward a robust programme of review to lead to improvements in outcomes for children. Following a report presented to the ACE Committee on 29 June 2015, the Committee agreed to set up a Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) to oversee the improvements and to ensure that the pace of improvements was maintained. It was also agreed to appoint an Independent Chair.
- 1.2 The Improvement Board meets monthly. The Board has met three times since it was established in July 2015 and this is the first of four reports to ACE. To date the Board has had good representation from partners including Health and the Police. The Council have yet to identify representatives from Education.
- 1.3 This report is being brought to ACE Committee to provide Elected Members with a view of the progress made since July 2015.
- 1.4 In summary, it is too early for the Board to report that there is evidence of consistently high standards of practice, that there is strong learning culture and that there is evidence of an outcome focused approach to practice although there are some 'green shoots'.
- 1.5 There is however, evidence that a strong recruitment drive underpinned by the

Reading Offer is paying dividends in the recruitment of more permanent social workers and that day to day management of staff is beginning to set high expectations on social work practice but there is much to be done if the local authority were to be deemed 'good' and the pace of improvement needs to be accelerated across all services and embedded into day to day practice and management.

- 1.6 This report reflects the views of the Board over three meetings, provides an update to ACE Committee and identifies the foci for the next three months.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the report be noted.

2.2 That Members identify any particular issues, which they would like the CSIB to focus on over the next few months.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 At the meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee held on 29 June 2015, it was agreed to establish a Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) to oversee the implementation of the Children's Services Improvement Plan and to ensure that system wide leadership is in place and creates the conditions for effective partnership working and practice will make a difference in improving outcomes for children. That there is a golden thread of oversight from top to bottom, with clear line of sight between leaders, practitioners and children; that the voice of the child informs everything that Children's Services does; that there are robust and effective quality assurances in place to support the Improvement Plan; that impactful support and challenge from the Board with a clear oversight of improvement plan delivery is welcomed and embedded and that the work of the Board supports Reading Borough Council to be a confident learning organisation which aspires to be 'good'.

3.2 The Terms of Reference and objectives of the CSIB are attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

3.3 The priorities agreed by ACE Committee were based upon 6 key themes:

- Leadership and Governance
- Partnership working
- Quality and Consistency of practice
- Workforce development
- Performance management and quality assurance
- Improving Services for Children Looked After and Achieving Permanence

3.4 This is the first of 4 reports to ACE Committee over the year. The Board has met three times since it was established in July 2015

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

4.1 The decision to establish the Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) and the work of the CSIB is aligned with the strategic priorities of Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2018 and in particular to 'safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable.

4.2 The CSIB does not duplicate the work of Reading Safeguarding Children Board (RSCB) but does scrutinise and receive reports from the RSCB in order to meet the objectives.

4.3 The Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services is writing a paper to set out the governance arrangements which will also show links between the Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) and other statutory boards. This is due to be circulated to Board members prior to the next CSIB meeting.

5. PROGRESS ON PRIORITIES

5.1 Leadership and Governance - the Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services took up her permanent post on 1 July 2015. A number of key posts have yet to be filled, however a permanent Head of Service has been appointed and will take up her post in the next two months. The interim staff have brought some strong practices to the services and have established regular challenge meetings, a resources panel and have weekly monitoring meetings to ensure any drift and delay, particularly in child protection visits are addressed swiftly. It is reported to the CSIB that the Managing Director and Lead Member have regular meetings to monitor on-going and day-to-day developments. While there are signs that some of these management initiatives are making a difference, it is too soon to say whether the culture is embedded into practice, which will tackle some of the drift and delay previously reported. Officers have reported that 73% of activities in the Improvement Plan have been delivered.

5.2 Partnership working - the CSIB is well represented by partners, including Health and Thames Valley Police who play an active role in the CSIB. The RSCB provides a regular update on progress. The latest report has confirmed that good progress has been made on implementing the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) action plan, signing off the Neglect Protocol and agreeing thresholds across all partner organisations, which are being supported by multi-agency training events. The local authority has yet to identify a Primary and a Secondary Head Teacher to attend the CSIB. Further work is required to develop the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Access and Assessment Team to ensure that referrals to assessment are carried out more swiftly. Officers report that workshops on process mapping and standard setting have been set up.

5.3 Quality and Consistency of Practice - the most recent report on the Improvement Plan showed that significant tasks have yet to be completed.

The CSIB received a report on the Audit Framework and the planned programme of audits at its meeting in September. To date the CSIB has received a report following the audit of children referred for a second time having been stepped down. This revealed that of the 10 cases audited 1 was deemed to be good and 9 required improvement. The Board was re-assured by officers that this audit had been acted upon by managers. The audit covering the first quarter of the Board's life was not available and will be presented to the next CSIB. There is insufficient information at this stage to say whether audits are showing improved practices across all service areas. It was reported that improvements had been made in carrying out child protection visits according to a child's plan and for the last month this stood at 96%. The national requirement of year to date data from July 2015 remained a cause for concern and the Board have asked for regular updates on this data. The other two areas of focus for the Board over the last two meetings has been the number of days from referral to assessment and the number of Personal Education Plans (PEPS) for Looked After Children. It was thought that the latest data was not accurate because of the change to MOSAIC from Frameworki. Officers have reported to the CSIB that a new quality assurance framework has now been implemented and a greater level of scrutiny is in place and are confident that this will bring improvements.

- 5.4 Workforce Development - it was reported to the CSIB that all tasks identified in the Improvement Plan are on target and that no tasks are overdue. An overall strategy has been approved by the Corporate Management Team and has now been presented to the Corporate Parenting Board. There is still a high percentage of agency staff in post, with 30% of agency workers covering substantive posts. Some good work has taken place, which has included RBC improving the Market Supplement for a number of grades, recruiting Assisted Year in Supported Employment (AYSE) in two cohorts each year, pushing ahead with the development of a Social Work Academy and providing additional pool cars and closer working with Agency Recruitment organisations. RBC has also launched a marketing campaign with national media.
- 5.5 Performance Management - at the most recent CSIB it was reported that no tasks are overdue in the Improvement Plan and that activities show an upward trend. This is an area of particular focus for members of the CSIB with members requesting an improved quality assurance framework to underpin the Improvement Plan and more aligned with Ofsted's Annex A, supported by a forensic analytically report each month. The Board have asked for this for the next meeting.
- 5.6 Services for Looked After Children and Permanency - officers have reported an upward trend with much work being done but significant work still needs to be done. It would appear that this area of work remains fragile. Officers reported that all LAC would have an up to date PEP by the end of October 2015. The most recent report shows that there is a weekly management focus on the outcomes of the review of placement orders and that the LAC and Care Leavers Strategy and action plan is being progressed. CSIB will continue to monitor this work closely.

- 5.7 In summary, the CSIB recognises the work that is being done at all levels to bring about consistently good practice, it is too early for this report to say that there is evidence of this consistency or that there is evidence of an outcome focussed approach to practice. More work needs to be done to embed the findings of audits into a quality assurance framework and to demonstrate that services are being co-designed with children, young people, families and staff.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Whilst an EAI has not been completed in compiling this report, CSIB members do focus on making sure some of the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people's needs are being met in a timely and appropriate way.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no known legal implications.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The CSIB has no budgetary responsibilities.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Minutes of the CSIB meetings
9.2 Children's Services Improvement Plan highlight reports and reports by officers to the CSIB have been used to compile this report.

APPENDIX 1

1. Purpose of the Board

- 1.1 The Reading Children's Services Improvement Board was created following the approval of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee.
- 1.2 The Reading Children's Services Improvement Board will advise on, and challenge the content of delivery, progress and outcomes of the Improvement Plan to support immediate and sustainable improvement of services and outcomes for children and young people in need of help and protection and/or looked after children in Reading.

2. Chair

- 2.1 The Board will be chaired by an independent chair.
- 2.2 Helen McMullen has been appointed by the Council to undertake this role.
- 2.3 If the Chair is unable to attend any meeting then she shall appoint an appropriate person from the existing Board membership to deputise in her absence.

3. Membership of the Board

- Independent Chair
- Lead Member for Children's Services and Families
- Managing Director
- Children's Safeguarding Board Chair
- Director Children, Education and Early Help Services
- Head of Children's Services
- Director of Joint Commissioning - Reading Clinical Commissioning Group
- Local Policing Area Commander - Reading - Thames Valley Police
- Head Teachers - Primary and Secondary
- Principal Social Worker

4. Ex Officio Members

- 4.1 Ex Officio Members are:
 - Children's Services Transformation Business Manager
 - Programme Manager
 - Secretariat
- 4.2 Additional participants will be invited to Board meetings as appropriate with the agreement of the Chair.

5. Meeting Frequency:

- 5.1 The Board will meet on a monthly basis and a schedule of meetings will be agreed for 2015 in the first instance.

6. Quorum

- 6.1 The Improvement Board has no specified quorum. It will be a matter for the chair to determine whether there are sufficient members either present or able to attend to undertake the necessary business of the Board.

7. Alternates

- 7.1 Members of the Board will be required to attend in person or send their apologies. Deputies can only attend in place of Board Members in exceptional circumstances, with prior agreement of the chair. For others attending the Board to support its work, deputies may attend with the prior agreement of the Chair.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 The Board will:

1. Consider, comment upon and agree the detail of an Improvement Plan (to be prepared and agreed formally by the Council) which will provide a focus for the Board's work;
2. Receive proposals for addressing the key performance issues identified by the Director of Children, Education & Early Help Services as well as independent reviews and audit themes, including the receipt of relevant performance management information;
3. Oversee, monitor and challenge progress on, the implementation of the Council's Improvement Plan;
4. Advise on the implementation of the Improvement Plan, assessing risk and considering issues that arise that may be impeding on the delivery of the plan;
5. Assure itself that children, young people, families/carers, front-line practitioners and partners are all being appropriately engaged by the Council in addressing the key performance issues identified within the Improvement Plan;
6. Assure itself that the Council has appropriate governance arrangements and practices which are sustainable in the longer term, in order to maintain a high standard of performance across children's services;
7. Agree the future work plan of the Board by maintaining a relevant forward programme;
8. Support the chair in agreeing the key issues to be formally reported to the Council and the ACE Committee as part of the formal reporting requirements, and;
9. Consider reports from the Council and its partners, as may be required, on the wider improvement agenda in children's services.

10. Members of the Board are responsible for reporting progress and key issues through their own organisations' governance structures;
11. Members of the Board that belong to the Senior Leadership of Reading Borough Council are expected to drive change and improve services through leading by example; and
12. The Independent Chair will attend the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee meeting to report on progress in delivering the Children's Services Improvement Plan.

9. Administration

- 9.1 The Council will be responsible for the preparation of the agenda and papers for the meetings of the Board, in consultation with the Independent Chair. Papers will be distributed to Board Members at least five working days in advance of the meeting.
- 9.2 The Council will also be responsible for the administration, clerking and hosting of the Board meetings and will ensure that minutes are taken and distributed to Board members within one week of a Board meeting. The Chair should agree minutes before circulation.

10. Accountabilities

- 10.1 The Improvement Board will be accountable to the Leader of the Council and the Managing Director. Regular updates will be provided to the Corporate Management Team and the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee.

11. Review

- 11.1 The Children's Improvement Board's responsibility for the Improvement Plan is time-limited. Initially the Board is set up for a period of twelve months with a progress review to be held after six months.
- 11.2 Independent quarterly reviews will be commissioned by the Managing Director when work is completed from the Improvement Plan. These will:
 - Check that outcomes and success measures are in place;
 - There is clear evidence of impact and practice is embedded;
 - Staff are aware and understand the position and that the actions have made a clear difference; and
 - Be developmental and supportive with staff - by engaging in conversations and providing feedback.
- 11.3 Once the Council and the Improvement Board have assured themselves that their work has been embedded into Reading Borough Council's normal service governance and business as usual, a report will be submitted to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee explaining that the responsibility for the Children's Improvement Plan will then be transferred to

the Corporate Management Team and the Improvement Board would be dissolved.

APPENDIX 2

Reading Borough Council Children's Services Improvement Board

Objectives for the CSIB

The main objectives for the board are to ensure that:

- system wide leadership is in place and creates the conditions for effective partnership working and practice which will make a difference to children and young people who fall under responsibility of Reading Borough Council.
- there is a golden thread of oversight from 'top to bottom 'with a clear line of sight between leaders, practitioners and children.
- the voice of the child informs everything that the children's services in Reading Borough Council does.
- there are robust and effective quality assurance framework in place to support the Improvement Plan.
- impactful support and challenge from the board with a clear oversight of the improvement plan and subsequent outcomes for children, young people and families is welcomed and embedded.
- it supports Reading Borough Council to be a confident learning organisation.