

## 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:	2 MARCH 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	13
TITLE:	SECOND QUARTER REPORT CSIB		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR J. GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 ACE committee on 29 June 2015 agreed to establish a Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) to oversee the implementation of the Improvement Plan and service improvements in Children's Social Care.
- 1.2 The report on the first quarter was discussed and accepted at ACE on 5 November 2015. This is the second quarter report and covers the meetings held in November 2015 and January 2016.
- 1.3 The board continues to have good partnership representation, including schools and provides a good level of challenge but board members have also offered support which has been well received and has been most helpful to the council.
- 1.4 In summary, the board has seen an improvement in outcomes particularly in relation to Looked After Children, with strategies being developed dealing with the right issues.
- 1.5 At the January meeting, as Chair, I asked Board members to consider the impact of the board over the last 6 months. Whilst some members felt that they couldn't comment as they had joined the board recently this report sets out their views including the fact that board members feel more positive about recent meetings as reports produced have been timely, informative and have enabled a discussion to take place.
- 1.6 There continues to be good evidence to the board that practice is improving, lessons are being learnt, that the strong and determined recruitment drive is paying dividends and that over time the pace of improvement will accelerate.

- 1.7 Members asked at the last meeting to have some further information about how audits had changed practice and that information is included in this report.
- 1.8 This will be final report as I have now stood down as Chair. The Managing Director and Administration are currently recruiting a new Chair.

## 2. *RECOMMENDED ACTION*

- 2.1 That the report be noted.
- 2.2 That members identify any issues which they would like to see as a focus in the next quarter.

## 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 At the ACE Committee on 29 June 2015 it was agreed that a Children's Services Improvement Board be set up to oversee the implementation of the Children's Services Improvement Plan. The remit of the Board is to provide impactful support and challenge through leadership and partnership working, ensure that the 'voice of the child' informs practice and actions of staff and to enable improvements to be made possible by doing the right things at the right time.
- 3.2 The Terms of Reference and **objectives** are attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The priorities agreed at ACE were based upon 6 key themes:
  - Leadership and Governance
  - Partnership working
  - Quality and Consistency of practice
  - Workforce development
  - Performance management and quality
  - Improving services for Children Looked After and Achieving Permanence
- 3.4 The Board has now met six times, has been well attended by partners and well served by officers and has received a wide range of reports, including the new LAC data matrix.

## 4. CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC AIMS

- 4.1 The work of the CSIB is aligned with the Strategic Priorities of Reading Borough Council as set out in the Corporate Plan and in particular 'safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable.'

## 5. PROGRESS ON PRIORITIES

- 5.1 Leadership and Governance - the permanent Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services left the authority on 5 November 2015 and the Local Authority asked the Director of Adults and Health to step in to cover both directorates short term. A number of key posts have been filled on a permanent basis, including the Head of Service (Early Help), Principal Social Worker and the Service Manager of Access and Assessment and MASH and a longer term appointment was made to fill the vacancy of Head of

Safeguarding. This has brought stability to the services. The access to resources panel and the Performance meetings continue to bring rigour to the services provided for children and their families. Much remains to be done but there is a real energy and focus to the work.

- 5.2 Partnership Working - The CSIB continues to be well represented and attended by partnership organisations and all play an active role in the meetings. Two Head teachers are now members of the board and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board makes a significant contribution and also ensures that work is not duplicated across the two boards. The work undertaken to seek the views of Board members about the impact of the Board shows a positive picture and particularly Board members feeling that the last few meetings are much improved with papers arriving ahead of the meeting, officers presenting clear reports and they see the Board providing a forum for change management. They also said that the fact senior leaders from services across Reading attend has made a difference and believe that this has set the tone for stronger challenge in a professional environment and provide a wider perspective of improvement. This has had other benefits to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the LSCB. One comment said that partners now see themselves as 'part of the improvement journey in a fully integrated and supportive manner' The Board has held and will continue to hold Children Services managers to account but more work has still to be done to avoid the duplication of work and reports.
- 5.3 Quality and Consistency - the Improvement plan has now been re-written and clearly identifies what remains to be done and what has been completed. Further work is being done to show whether changes have been embedded into practice and are secure. The timeliness of Child Protection visits have improved. A new Quality Assurance Framework was presented to the Board and Heads of Service have re-assured Board members that this is being implemented and making a difference. A number of Audits have been carried out with remedial actions identified. Service and Team Managers have been charged by the Head of Safeguarding and Head of Business Transformation and Governance to act upon these audits and it was reported that this is closely followed up through supervision files. It was pleasing to note that good practice has also been highlighted by audits including the use of multi-agency working and referral to Sexual Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference. Training has also been given to 30 members of staff on the auditing process and a new audit tool developed. It was reported that the new framework requires managers to sit alongside front line workers so that audit becomes a learning opportunity.
- 5.4 Workforce Development - whilst there is still a high percentage of agency staff in post, recent recruitment activity has paid dividends with more permanent social workers being secured. A number of staff conferences have been held with a focus on 'Getting to Good' which have informed practice and celebrated good work.
- 5.5 Performance management - At the January board it was reported that all tasks were on target. Board members requested that the plan now needed to show impact. A new quality assurance strategy has been presented to the board and the new data matrix for LAC was discussed which shows real time data. The Board has requested to see the data in context with trend data and data for Children in Need and Child Protection.

- 5.6 Services for Looked after Children and Permanency - although reports had been requested the board has not received any written reports over this quarter on permanency. This was requested for the February meeting and remains an area of concern.
- 5.7 In summary, the CSIB continues to recognise the enormous amount of work which has been done to improve practice and contact with children. Work needs to continue to embed good practice and to make sure that the changes made are secure across the services.
- 5.8 As this will be last report as Chair of the CSIB, I would like to thank the members of the Board for their enormous contribution and to thank staff for reporting to the board in a positive way.

## **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

## **8. 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 report by officers to the CSIB have been used to compile this report.

## Appendix 1

### 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.