

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	3 DECEMBER 2020
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

<b><u>CONTACT DETAILS</u></b>			
<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Children and Learning</b>	
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**STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

Not applicable

**BRIEF SUMMARY**

To brief the Panel on progress against the revised Children and Learning Improvement Plan.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

	(i)	That progress be noted
	(ii)	That there is a further update to the Scrutiny Panel in February 2021.

**REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.	The journey for the improvement in the outcomes by Children's Services requires a robust improvement plan and oversight by the Scrutiny Panel.
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**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

2.	None
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**DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)**

<b>Review of Plan</b>	
3.	The updated improvement plan, attached as Appendix 1, was submitted to Ofsted in October 2020. There has been no formal feedback, although Ofsted will review progress against the plan during the next round of inspection activity. The service was notified of a focused visit in October 2020. However, this was postponed due to the second lockdown.
4.	The service provided a performance report to the Improvement Board in November 2020 and this is appended as Appendix 2. The performance report contains an overview of performance across the service and this is summarised in the following paragraph.

## Overview of performance across Children and Learning KPI's

### GOING WELL OR BETTER

- Timeliness of MASH decision making maintained during pandemic
- Percentage of authorised care plans remains consistent
- Percentage of children leaving care via adoption route has recovered after pandemic had impacted upon court activity
- Percentage of children leaving care by Special Guardianship route has recovered after pandemic had impacted upon court activity
- Percentage of authorised pathways plans remains good
- Percentage of care leavers in touch and in suitable accommodation remains consistent

### ONES TO WATCH

- Sickness absence is reducing overall, but monthly increases are still evident
- Conversion from contacts to referrals is still higher than we would like it to be
- Rate of Initial Child Protection Conferences is not stable
- Timeliness of single assessment completion shows a small reducing trend
- There are better levels of contact with children with CPP, but this needs to improve further
- CSE numbers require investigation; although missing LAC episodes is an improving picture
- Timeliness of LAC visiting needs to improve
- Early Help data needs to be confirmed by data team

### THINGS TO DO BETTER

- Caseloads remain too high in assessment, Protection and Court (PACT) and Looked after Children (LAC) teams
- The level of agency workers remains too high
- Audit completion has reduced, with an impact on the Year of the Child cohort
- ICPC timeliness has decreased notably in October 2020
- Rates of sec.47, children subject to child protection planning and looked after children remain high
- Education Training and Employment engagement for 17 – 18 year old care leavers has reduced
- Use of IFA is static and in house foster placements shows a reducing trend.

Areas where the service can evidence progress:

## Overview of performance across Improvement Plan

### GOING WELL OR BETTER

- Impact of IRO staffing *evidenced by recruitment activity, IRO alerts, IRO performance data*
- Practice model has been agreed *evidenced by meeting record;*
- Panels maintained and extended *evidenced by meeting records*
- Numbers of Early Help cases with open assessment *evidenced by performance data*
- MASH performance; *evidenced by performance data*
- Ongoing oversight of LADO function *evidenced by management audit records*
- Ongoing oversight of EHE response *evidenced by monthly reports*
- Focus on SEND; *evidenced by draft of self evaluation, EHCP completion performance and audit report*
- Focus on good working relationship with Cafcass; *evidenced by meeting records*
- MET performance and oversight; *evidenced by RHI data, operational group meeting records and tracker*
- Edge of Care referrals and case numbers continue to increase and impact is evident; *evidenced through performance data*
- Youth justice strategy, staffing and service responses to disproportionality and first time entrants showing progress; *evidenced through YJMB minutes and audit*
- LAC performance – planning authorisation and timeliness; *evidenced through performance data*
- Supervision in LAC; *evidenced by audit return*
- Virtual school performance; *evidenced through suite of Virtual Head Teacher's reports*
- Good suitable accommodation performance (include use of B and B); *evidenced by performance data*
- Fostering annual audit; *evidenced by audit report and Service Delivery Plan*
- Fostering statement complete; *evidenced by Corporate Parenting Committee minutes*
- Good performance in respect of adoption timeliness, numbers of children adopted, completion of life story books and case exemplar; *evidenced by performance data and service reports*
- Completion of SCR overview report / development of CSAFE framework and webinar; *evidenced by reports and webinar film*

An overview of the critical challenges - Here, the Executive Director asked the service to define the critical areas for ongoing focus and these are identified as:

**Key practice themes:** Assessment (case summary / chronology); SMART Planning; Participation / direct work (Visit record); Supervision.

**Enablers:** Recruitment and retention; Reflective Supervision; Response to key practice themes (neglect, trigger trio); Practice Model.

**Understanding the quality and impact of practice:** Audit schedule and completion.

<b>Overview of performance across Improvement Plan</b>	
<p><b>THINGS TO DO BETTER</b></p> <p>Key practice themes: <b>Assessment</b> (case summary / chronology); <b>SMART Planning</b>; <b>Participation / direct work</b> (Visit record); <b>Supervision</b></p> <p>Enablers: <b>Recruitment and retention</b>; <b>Reflective Supervision</b>; <b>Response to key practice themes</b> (neglect, trigger trio); <b>Practice Model</b></p> <p>Understanding the quality and impact of practice: <b>audit schedule and completion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the number of agency workers; the number of social workers per child and recruiting into vacant management posts. Increasing the number of foster carers (including suitably trained carers for vulnerable adolescents).</li> <li>• The quality of supervision (including reflective supervision) and direct work (and recording of children seen alone in PACT)</li> <li>• Audit completion – the level of completion across the service and ensuring a schedule for thematic audits (Inc. step down, viability)</li> <li>• The level of eligible two year old Early Years funding being accessed</li> <li>• The review of the Continuum of Need</li> <li>• The implementation of learning circles across the service</li> <li>• Across Assessment / PACT– the quality of assessment, risk assessment, voice of the child, planning and response to domestic abuse</li> <li>• Child protection – ensuring management audits are undertaken and CP champions are recruited</li> <li>• Review of our Practice Standards</li> <li>• Increasing the number of looked after children with plans for permanence.</li> <li>• Increasing the completion of life story work for LAC</li> <li>• Improving the quality of care plans</li> <li>• Increasing the level of LAC participation</li> <li>• LAC access to emotional wellbeing support</li> <li>• EPEP completion and ETE performance for care leavers</li> <li>• Improving placement stability analysis and provide foster carers training update</li> <li>• Scheduling thematic audits against serious case review themes and extend training around neglect</li> </ul>	
<b>Governance</b>	
5.	The Improvement Board convened in November 2020 with revised membership and Terms of Reference. Membership now includes senior leaders from safeguarding partner agencies; improvement leads from the Department for Education and Local Government Association and the chairs of the staff reference group. An independent chair of the Board has been identified and will assume her responsibilities in January 2021.
6.	The chairs of the staff reference group, convened in response to the collective grievance, presented positively on staff engagement development and the work of the group. The presentation is attached as Appendix 3. The Improvement Board also received a presentation from the MASH and Assessment Service; maintaining the 'line of sight' on key service areas.
<b>Update on Whistleblowing Action Plan</b>	
7.	The Improvement Board received an update on the whistleblowing action plan, and this is attached as Appendix 4. Evidence was provided of traction against the five key priorities. Progress against the plan will be reported to the Scrutiny Panel through this report.
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Capital/Revenue</u></b>	
8.	None at this stage
<b><u>Property/Other</u></b>	
9.	None at this stage
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u></b>	
10.	S.111 Local Government Act 1972

<b><u>Other Legal Implications:</u></b>	
11.	None
<b>RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS</b>	
12.	The overall improvement plan is risk assessed.
<b>POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS</b>	
13.	<p>This developing improvement plan is an important contributor to achieving the outcomes desired for children in Southampton.</p> <p>The Corporate Plan 2020 sets out the following regarding the wellbeing of children in the city:</p> <p>“Working with partners to deliver the ambitions set out in the five-year Health and Wellbeing Strategy, this area looks at wellbeing across the city, with a focus on adults and children’s social care, education and public health. We work closely with partners to help safeguard vulnerable people across the city. We are focused on delivering strong customer experience across the Adults and Children &amp; Families services. We want Southampton to be a city that is recognised for its proactive approach to preventing problems and intervening early, as well being a ‘Child Friendly City’ where children and young people have great opportunities and an aspiration to achieve. We want our residents to have the information and support they need to lead safe, active, healthy lives and to be able to live independently for longer.”</p>

<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	All
<b><u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u></b>	
<b>Appendices</b>	
1.	Children and Learning Improvement Plan – October 2020
2.	Performance Report – November 2020
3.	Staff Reference Group Report – November 2020
4.	Investigation Action Plan Position Statement – November 2020

**Documents in Members’ Rooms**

1.	None
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out?	<b>No</b>
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out?	<b>No</b>
<b>Other Background Documents</b>	
<b>Other Background documents available for inspection at:</b>	

<b>Title of Background Paper(s)</b>	<b>Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)</b>
1.	None