

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 24th November 2011

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PART I **FOR INFORMATION, SCRUTINY AND CHALLENGE**

PROGRESS REPORT: OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

1. Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the progress following the outcome of the Ofsted announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children which took place between April 4th and 15th 2011, with the report published on June 1st 2011.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel is requested to:

- a) Note actions and progress since the publication of the Ofsted report
- b) Agree specific areas for further scrutiny, taking into account the agreed role of the Improvement Board.

3. Community Strategy Priorities

Celebrating diversity, enabling inclusion

- By identifying and prioritising services for vulnerable groups in the Slough population, by targeting support to meet the needs of children and young people's identified needs and by ensuring that we build on the good and outstanding judgements in the Ofsted report and by addressing the areas for improvement.

Adding years to Life and Life to years

- Through focussing on the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people and their parents and carers in Slough, and providing targeted services through partnership working primarily with the NHS to secure measurable health improvements

Being Safe, Feeling Safe

- By offering effective support to families to help them do their best for their children so that children and young people are safe in their families and communities

- By recognising that parents are the main carers for their children, and by offering services that enable them to continue to care for their children successfully so that children can grow up within their own families and communities wherever possible
- By carrying out respective roles across the local authority and partner agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable children in our community are protected from harm and they are enabled to live with their families
- By carrying out our statutory role as a local authority to provide services for children in need, to safeguard them and look after children whose parents are unable to do so.
- By working effectively with partner agencies so that they also contribute to safeguarding children and young people and demonstrate improved outcomes for those children and young people and their families.
- By ensuring that children and young people who are looked after have the standards of care and life opportunities that we would want for our own children with contributions from all partner agencies.

Prosperity for All

- By offering early education and family support to parents of young children so that they can focus on meeting their children's needs and overcoming personal and family difficulties that affect their ability to care for their children.
- By promoting educational achievement which gives children and young people in care and leaving care enjoyment in learning and increased opportunities for success in adult life.
- By maintaining high levels of Education, Employment and Training (EET) for young people who are looked after beyond 16 years of age.
- By promoting vulnerable young people's social and emotional development alongside advances in educational achievement.
- By supporting local nursery providers to secure optimum standards so that parents and carers are able to secure economic prosperity/independence for themselves and their family.

4. Other Implications

a) Financial

Financial implications of the Improvement Plan were included in the report to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 5th September 2011.

Members are asked to note that the additional activity identified in the Improvement Plan will be resourced without impact on front line services in line with Ofsted requirements. The estimated cost of activities requiring additional funding were included in the papers to the October Scrutiny meeting. A review of the financial implications is in progress to ensure consistency with the Improvement Plan submitted to the Minister.

b) Risk Management

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation
<p>Improve management and leadership capacity and capability; recruit new staff and retain existing skilled staff; provide training programme based on national standards to ensure high quality practice and management.</p>	<p>Improvements in practice in children's social care to focus on and deliver the changes required by Ofsted and the Improvement Board.</p>	<p>Specialist support project between August and November 2011 has engaged staff in, and produced a Quality Assurance Framework including a risk assessment, supervision policy and practice and management expectations.</p>
<p>Review thresholds for children's social care. Ensure partner agencies are participating in the Early Intervention Strategy. Create a clear multi-agency response to the 'Team around the Child'.</p>	<p>Rising child population, increasing complexity of and numbers of vulnerable families and new arrivals into Slough resulting in increased demand for services and financial consequences.</p>	<p>Monitor rise in child population through applications for primary school places, health data and contacts.</p>
<p>Use Sector Support Review of Early Intervention and Prevention to re-engage partners in strategy and implementation; commission services on the basis of identified need.</p>	<p>Engagement of key partners in the Early Intervention Strategy and Improvement Plan.</p>	<p>Improvement Board includes representatives from Health and Police. Children's Partnership Board and LSCB partner engagement is being reviewed.</p>
<p>SBC and partner agencies to assess spending on early intervention and safeguarding and review commissioning of services linked to identified need through the JSNA. Review impact of changes in resources across all agencies in relation to early intervention, safeguarding and looked after children.</p>	<p>Lack of resources to deliver improvement work. Changing financial environment across all partner agencies.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Improvement Plan has identified key areas for additional funding amounting to £231k 2011-12 and £79k 2012-13. to carry out key tasks. SBC Cabinet decision 17.10.11 to fund base budget for looked after children and GOLD project to secure additional short term and permanent placements for looked after children.</p>
<p>Improvement Plan monitored by the Board six weekly, and the Project Group of Theme Leads fortnightly.</p>	<p>Progress against key areas of work does not drive change sufficiently fast</p>	<p>Monitoring of progress in all five themes. Identification of priority areas and dependencies for improvement work. Communication with staff and partner agencies</p>
<p>Ofsted unannounced inspection 2011 (last annual inspection</p>	<p>Ofsted unannounced inspection 2011. Inspectors judge that</p>	<p>Work carried out to date to review and audit cases and</p>

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation
October 2010).	contact, referral and assessment services have areas for priority action	practice. Three month contract for work on performance improvement and quality control includes preparation for unannounced inspection. Report showing progress against Ofsted recommendations.
Development of SBC Workforce Strategy includes specific focus on recruitment, retention and training in children's social care	High staff turnover reduces consistency of service Impact of training on staff not demonstrated through improved practice	Recruitment and retention of staff through the workforce strategy as one of the highest priorities for the Improvement Plan
Management and leadership training to be provided linked with the recommendations in the Improvement Plan	Leadership and management capacity and capability within SBC	Skills and gap analysis to be carried out. Completion of internal structure review within ECS.
Use sector support recommendations to drive agreed improvements in the role and functions of the LSCB.	LSCB changes to focus on key priorities for Slough and improve effective partnership working overseeing safeguarding in Slough.	Interim Chair appointed from 1.11.11.

c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The actions proposed in this report must be designed to comply with the human rights of the clients. There are no immediate legal implications arising from the report.

d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An equalities impact assessment is not required in relation to this information report.

e) Workforce

The final Improvement Plan contains sections on Capacity and Capability, and Social Work Practice. The main workforce priorities for the Council in delivering the next stage of the Improvement Plan are the development of a workforce strategy as part of the Council's overall Workforce Strategy with particular focus on:

i. Recruitment and retention of staff to key posts

18 staff have been recruited to permanent posts since June 2011. However, as part of natural turnover, there will be some further vacancies

at Team Manager, Assistant Team Manager and Social Worker level in coming months and a recruitment programme needs to be put in place to attract new candidates with the range of competences identified by the Social Work Reform Board.

ii. Capacity and Capability

Job descriptions to be completed based on the competences issued by the Social Work Reform Board and used in recruitment.

Recruitment of permanent staff into key roles at management and practitioner level.

iii. Training

A training programme for leaders, managers and practitioners based on the Improvement Plan.

5. Supporting Information

5.1 Background

The report to Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 9th June 2011 gave background information about the Ofsted inspection report published on 1st June 2011, and preliminary information about actions following the inspection.

The report of September 5th updated members on the role of the Improvement Board and the development of the Improvement Plan

The report of October 12th gave members information about the Improvement Notice issued by the Minister on 29th September 2011, and updates on the themes of the Improvement Plan.

5.2 A summary of progress against Plan Themes

Theme 1 Social Care Practice

- Staff across children's social care have been involved in the specialist support project which ran from August to November 2011, resulting in the publication of a Quality Assurance Framework including practice and management standards, risk assessment, supervision policy, and other quality assurance systems to ensure consistent practice and quality of casework. This will be given to all existing staff, and new staff and agency staff on induction and used as the basis for all practice.
- There has been improvement in one key indicator as a result of a focus on practice – 'Initial Assessments completed and authorised within the timescales' shows a strong upward trend during October. Work on the second key indicator 'Core Assessments completed within timescale' will be slower to show improvement because it covers a 35 day period, but weekly monitoring demonstrates impact of changed processes and practice guidance.

- Weekly checkpoint reports have been introduced to check key performance indicators, team workloads and themes arising in the service.
- Independent auditors have now reported on the final 20 cases and report some improvements in key areas and identified areas for remedial action and training and development. Any immediate remedial actions have been taken to address individual casework and management on cases raised through the Independent Audit, themes are being used in management, supervision and planning training.
- An internal audit programme is in place ranging from 'deep dive' audits to spot checks.
- Internal organisational changes planned and under way including a temporary increase in capacity through separating the management of referral, assessment and child protection services from Looked After Children services. This will be followed by separation of social work functions to create a child protection team and a children looked after team.

Theme 2 Capacity and Capability

- Staff vacancies and turnover continues to present problems in offering continuity of service to children and families. The highest turnover has been in agency staff. We have recruited 21 new permanent staff since June 2011 and the turnover rate is slowing.
- Interim arrangements have been made to fill the most crucial posts. A Competency Framework is being developed to set out the requirements for new and existing staff based on the recommendations of the Social Work Reform Board. The most urgent priority for the service is to start a recruitment drive for new permanent practitioners and managers immediately.
- The training programme for current and new staff, based on identified needs from the Independent Audit, the 'Childs Journey', the specialist support project, the social work health check and the Social Work Reform Board competences needs to be commissioned and put in place.
- A new staff communication plan is in place, helping to build staff engagement, commitment and morale, and to encourage them to give feedback and ideas as part of their contribution to the Improvement Plan.
- A new caseload weighting system has been developed in conjunction with staff and assessment of staff caseloads is being undertaken.

Theme 3 Quality Assurance and Performance Management

- Paul Burnett has been appointed as Interim Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), pending a permanent appointment by April 2012.
- A new approach to performance management is being developed to ensure focus on outcomes for children and their families.
- Management of the Independent Reviewing Officer service has been moved to the Director to strengthen their challenge role and their ability to hold practitioners and managers across SBC and partner organisations to account; additional sector led specialist support has been agreed to carry out an external review of the Independent Reviewing Officers; IRO Standards are in place and being used and the escalation procedures are

being used systematically; the Participation Officer is working with parents and children on child protection plans, and has had 13 responses, with 5 being interested in being part of a focus group.

- The Sector Support project on Performance Management started work in October.
- The Sector Support project on the LSCB has made a series of recommendations for the Improvement Board and the LSCB to consider and implement.
- The Sector Support project on the role and function of the IRO Service.

Theme 4 Early Intervention and Prevention

- Early Intervention (EI) and Prevention Sector Support Work has produced an interim report for consideration by the Improvement Board (IB). This highlights the importance of the role of partner organisations in the provision of Early Help services.
- The structure and funding for the First Response is being reviewed in the light of the recommendations from the Sector Support work.
- The Early Intervention Strategy was included in the LSCB conference held on 2.11.11 to revive partner engagement.

Theme 5 Leadership, Governance and Finance

- Now that improved and targeted performance information is available, work is focused on ensuring that appropriate actions are developed and followed to address poor or declining performance.
- A strong emphasis on activities that support changed ways of working for practitioners and managers has been developed, supported by the Communications Plan and this will help ensure that staff are involved in and supportive of any changes.
- Risks against the delivery of the Improvement Plan have been analysed and are being regularly reviewed. Project management arrangements are in place.
- Detailed delivery plans are being developed for each Theme in the Improvement Plan now that it has been finalised.

5.3 Improvement Board

The third Improvement Board meeting will take place on 14th November 2011.

5.4 Improvement Plan

The Improvement Plan and the Chair's progress report are currently with the Minister. The Improvement Board will consider the Minister's feedback and make any changes necessary to the Plan before it is finally published and disseminated to members, staff and partners. The Improvement Plan has been updated to include a risk register. A communications plan is being developed as part of the communications strategy for the Improvement Plan.

5.5 Sector Led Support

The sector led support is based on the Improvement Plan, and will consist of the following:

- a. Support for the Director and Lead Member
- b. A review of early intervention and prevention work
- c. A review of the LSCB and partnership working arrangements
- d. A review of quality assurance and performance management arrangements
- e. A review of the IRO service

Work has started on all five areas. The Improvement Board to be held on 14th November will consider reports on the LSCB and Early Intervention and Prevention work.

5.6 Local Safeguarding Children Board

Paul Burnett has been appointed as Interim Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and will act as Chair until the appointment of a permanent Chair by April 2012.

6 Conclusion

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel are requested to note the contents of the report and identify any specific areas to be followed up at future meetings of the Panel.

7. Appendices Attached

None

8 Background Papers

Extraordinary Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 13th January 2010. Agenda item 2: 'Safeguarding in Slough: the Work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board'

Extraordinary Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 22nd April 2010. Agenda Item 2: 'Safeguarding in the Health Service'

Item 3 'Child Protection and the Independent Reviewing Service'

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 23rd June 2010. Agenda Item 8 'Implications of the Rise in the Numbers of Vulnerable Children 2008-10'

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 25th November 2010: Agenda Item 3

'Ofsted inspection, Contact Referral and Assessment Arrangements October 2010'. Agenda Item 4 'Safeguarding in Slough – Update on the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board'.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny on 25th January 2011: Agenda item 3: 'Ofsted Annual Children's Services Assessment 2010'.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 9th June 2011: Agenda item 10: Ofsted report on the Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children

Ofsted report on the announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services June 2011