

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	Monday 7 November 2022
Subject:	Children's Services Improvement Programme		
Report of:	Executive Director of Children's Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Children's Social Care		
Is this a Key Decision:	N	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	N		

Summary:

This report updates members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) on progress made against the Children's Improvement Plan.

Recommendation(s):

(1) Note the progress made and consider the priorities for the next quarter

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

For members of the Committee to consider progress made to date.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

NA

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no direct revenue implications with this report. Members will be aware that there is significant financial pressure in the service within the current year in respect of agency costs and accommodation costs. Remedial action plans have been presented and approved by Cabinet and Council. Work will continue during the current year on budget monitoring within the service and any additional financial pressure or additional

expenditure will need to be met from savings elsewhere within the Council. The Council's next three year Medium Term Financial Plan will take account of this Improvement Programme and the resources required to support it; this will be informed by the Director of Children's Services

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital implications with this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): To support the implementation of the Family Valued model the Council has been approved to receive £3m. To date £447k has been received.</p> <p>Following a successful bid to the Department for Education a further £300k has been approved to support the implementation of the Social Work Academy.</p>									
<p>Legal Implications:</p>									
<p>Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.</p>									
<p>Climate Emergency Implications:</p> <p>The recommendations within this report will</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Have a positive impact</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a neutral impact</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a negative impact</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> </table>		Have a positive impact	N	Have a neutral impact	Y	Have a negative impact	N	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
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Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable: The Improvement Programme seeks to deliver change across Children's Services whose activity protects and supports those children and young people who have complex care needs.</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Children's Services work with partners to support families in need of support and improve resilience.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services: Children's Services work with partners to support families in need of support and improve resilience.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer: The Council will take a lead role in work with partners to deliver change in Children's Services.</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform: The Council will work with partners to deliver change in Children's Services.</p>

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: NA
Greater income for social investment: NA
Cleaner Greener NA

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6989/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5189/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

The Executive Director Children’s Service and Education and his leadership team engage with partners across Sefton with regard to the Improvement Programme.

The voice of children, young people and their families will be integral to delivering change.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

Appendix A Improvement Plan

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

1.1 Member of the Committee will recall that the Children's Improvement Programme comprises of four themes;

- Quality - Ensuring the right staff are in the right place at the right time to deliver a consistent standard of good quality safeguarding services to children and families.
- Improving Implementation of Learning - Using what we know and learn to continuously improve and enhance the services we deliver for children and families.
- Improving Tools - Ensuring we have the right tools to enable the workforce to deliver good quality services for children and families.
- Improving Strategic Partnerships - Effective partnership working to enable the delivery of common goals and a high quality multi-agency response for children and families.

1.2 A phased approach is being taken to delivering change and this report updates on progress made against Phase 1 of the Improvement Plan and priorities for the next quarter. The Council will take the learning from Monitoring Visits to inform future phases of the Improvement Plan to drive the improvement needed to make a difference for children, young people and their families.

1.3 Feedback from the Ofsted's Regional Director recognises the initial phase of the Improvement Plan as

“laying the foundations to support improvement and is appropriately focused on the areas for improvement identified at the inspection, as well as wider service improvements and provides clear measures to monitor progress. The plan is thorough, detailed and demonstrates engagement with partners and the wider council.”

1.4 Work on the Improvement Plan activity continues to progress at pace, with grip being demonstrated at both a service and organisational level. The following section of this report highlights progress made and the Improvement Plan at Appendix A confirms the current status of activity as at the end of September 2022. Officers track progress against the Improvement Plan alongside the Performance Dashboard (that appears elsewhere on this agenda) and Service Plans progress.

2. Progress

Quality

- 2.1 A key priority has been ensuring a stable and experienced leadership team is in place to lead the change and develop a consistent standard of good quality services to children and families. All members of the leadership team are now permanent staff members.
- 2.2 All eleven Service Manager posts have now been recruited to on a permanent basis.
- 2.3 The Social Work Academy is now live and twenty two team members have been recruited to the Academy. Permanent appointments have been made to the Service Manager and Team Manager posts. Members of the Academy will benefit from protected caseloads.
- 2.4 Work has continued on rolling out the Family Valued Model with restorative practice and management oversight training being delivered. Further training will include assessment, planning and recording which will with the new Practice Standards and Quality Assurance Framework strengthen practice over time. The Leadership team are working hard to embed these mechanisms across Children's Services and to put in place processes that will provide assurance that practice standards are improving.
- 2.5 The Targeted Family Support Team is now live and this is a key element of the improvement work needed to improve the support to those families who do not require statutory Social Care. This team offers an intensive 12 to 20 week programme of support to families who need extra support.
- 2.6 The Family Time Team is also up and running. This team, working closely with Social Workers, ensures that for families going through court processes that their time together is beneficial, engaging and as fun as possible.
- 2.7 Young people have named the Complex Safeguarding team SPACE – Sefton Protection & Child Exploitation. This is a joint initiative with colleagues from Health. The team takes a trauma informed, responsive and supportive approach to working with young people to address the longer term issues associated with child exploitation.
- 2.8 Considerable progress has been made with the review of the Care Experienced Service Care to ensure processes and practice are robust, safe and in the young person's interests.

Improving Implementation of Learning

- 2.9 The complaints processes and procedures have been reviewed, with young people contributing to the design of infographics for staff, children and young people outlining the process.

- 2.10 At the time of writing this report analysis is underway of the feedback received through the staff survey. The survey has provided the Children's workforce with a real opportunity to identify improvements which would make a real difference and therefore help provide a better service for the children, young people and families of Sefton. Once the analysis is complete the key findings of the survey will be shared with Trade Unions and staff and work will commence on developing an action plan.
- 2.11 During October staff celebrated Practice Week an opportunity to learn from and celebrate good practice, listen to the views of staff and families and that will help us shape future phases of the Improvement Plan.

Improving Tools

- 2.12 Performance Dashboards are now available to the Leadership team, Service and Team Managers through Power BI. This means that Officers have accurate and timely data and intelligence available to them.
- 2.13 Staff now have access to Tri-X, an online tool which stores policies and procedures. Staff have also received training in using this tool.
- 2.14 The Public Law Outline (PLO) sets out the duties Local Authorities have when thinking about taking a case to court to ask for a Care Order to take a child into care or for a Supervision Order to be made. Work is underway to improve the processes and timeliness of this area of work.
- 2.15 Work is well underway on the gap analysis of business processes and policies.
- 2.16 Financial planning- regular monthly budget monitoring has taken place and the outcome of this together with the assumptions that underpin it as signed off by the service. Work has commenced between the Finance team and the Executive Director of Children's Services as to the budget assumptions for the next 2 financial years to align the Improvement Plan and required resources to deliver that to the Medium Term Financial Plan. This has focused on potential accommodation costs (either external or provision of accommodation by the Council) and agency costs that maybe required over and above the budgeted for staffing costs. The outcome of this work is signed off by the Executive Director of Children's Services.

Improving Strategic Partnerships

- 2.17 Electronic Personal Education Plans (PEP) have been implemented. Training has been delivered with half termly online hubs (twilight sessions) are in place to provide ongoing training and support for designated teachers to ensure that practice is inclusive. Fortnightly drop in surgeries are in place providing ongoing training and support to Social Work teams to ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEP) are an integral part of the care planning process.
- 2.18 The work to progress the recommissioning of the Sefton Placements Framework is on track. Young people with care experience have informed the service

specification and the tender was released in October 2022 with award due to take place in January 2023.

- 2.19 The Commissioning team are continuing with market engagement and development work.
- 2.20 An independent Scrutineer has identified that there is work to do to strengthen the Safeguarding Children Partnership. Over the next twelve months the Executive Director of Children's Services will work closely with Health and Police colleagues to strengthen this partnership and ensure that there is grip and that partners are working together to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm and neglect and that their welfare is promoted.

3. **Priorities for the Next Quarter**

3.1 Over the next few months the priorities are

- Continued recruitment of permanent workforce
- Considering staff survey feedback and developing an action plan
- Embedding new Practice Standards
- Further development of Data Warehouse
- Training in the use of Power BI
- Review of Business Support
- Review of In house Fostering and care experienced offer.

3.2 Officers are preparing for the

- Ofsted Monitoring Visits
- North West ADCS Peer Challenge 2022/23 in December
- North West PLO & Private Proceedings Peer Review in January 2023

3.3 Following the first Monitoring Visit the Improvement Plan will be reviewed and Phase 2 of the plan developed.