

15 October 2013

Children's Services Improvement Activity

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R Andrew – Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Executive Summary

This report provides the latest performance information and commentary to Walsall's Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel, together with a summary of progress against actions in the last reporting period, and the focus of actions planned for the next period.

Recommendations

1. To scrutinise the strategic activity to date and the direction of travel outlined in the Improvement Plan and performance report.

Background papers

Resource and legal considerations

This overview report relates to the strategic and operational improvement plans which are underpinned by resources, with the expectation that the Council and partner agencies will continue to contribute to ensure that resources across the partnership are prioritised to improvement needs.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families has exercised his power to issue an Improvement Notice that contains a concise range of outcome driven targets to address the issues raised in the previous Ofsted inspection. If the Council and partners fail to comply with the Improvement Notice by the assessment dates, then the Secretary of State for Education can use statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the Council to enter into appropriate arrangements to secure the necessary and rapid improvements required in children's services.

Citizen impact

Improving Children's Services will ensure the partnership works "*better together for children and young people*" in Walsall to ensure they are safe, happy and healthy with a better today and a brighter future.

Performance and risk management issues

Failure to adequately deliver sustained improvements to services and therefore meet the requirements of the Improvement Notice risks the safety and protection of children and young people. Delivery of the objectives in the Improvement Plan will be risk assessed and mitigated as appropriate.

The Improvement Board monitors progress and impact on a monthly basis. This is in addition to developing service and partnership wide performance management and quality assurance arrangements. The Department for Education (DfE) will also assess and evaluate progress and impact on a 6 monthly basis. The (delayed) 6 month review took place in August 2013 and the next is due in November 2013. This will include written reports from the independent chair of the Improvement Board as well as other supporting evidence, including self evaluation, external review and inspection.

Equality Implications

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? No

Consultation

There is on-going engagement with partners at a strategic level at the Improvement Board. One aspect of improvement is to ensure that other key partnership boards e.g. the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB), the Children and Young People's Partnership Board (C&YPPB), the Corporate Parenting Group and the Health and Wellbeing Board are productive, mutually challenging and impact positively on better outcomes for children. At an operational level, a multi-agency group, chaired by the Assistant Director Specialist Services, representing all key partners, is championing the implementation of the delivery plans which underpin ongoing improvements.

Staff and partner briefings are now in place on a 6 weekly basis to ensure key messages are communicated and to provide regular opportunities to capture feedback and learning from those delivering the services. Regular visits to teams and services provide additional opportunities for feedback and feed-forward as do email updates.

Contact Officer:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rose Collinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rose Collinson – interim Director, Children's Services

☎. 01922 652081

✉ collinsonr@walsall.gov.uk

1. Summary of progress since last report

Improving the quality of partnerships and governance

1.1 Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB)

The Board met on 25 September and reviewed the recent Ofsted report on help and protection of children and assessed the progress and impact against the priorities across the partnership. It received an update on the WSCB performance scorecard, designed to ensure robust oversight of safeguarding performance across the partnership.

The chair of the child sexual exploitation task group fed back on the work of the group and recommendations for future action to the Board.

WSCB is conducting a safeguarding readiness review on 16 October to ensure it is well positioned to fully take on its responsibilities for support, challenge and scrutiny of safeguarding activity and impact for children and families across the partnership. Work on the WSCB performance scorecard is informing the readiness review.

1.2 Walsall Children and Young People's Partnership (CYP) Board

The focus of CYP Board Members across the summer has been on:

- Agreeing the alignment of the CYP plan with the Walsall Plan
- Progressing the implementation of each of the Board priorities, which are to:
 1. Support the most vulnerable families to provide the best start in life for children
 2. Ensure that children maintain a healthy weight
 3. Reduce the harm caused by child sexual exploitation including children missing from school, care and home
 4. Promote greater diversity of choice for learning, training and employment for young people
 5. Develop a single whole life experience of support that ensures a seamless journey through childhood and adolescence into adulthood and removes the concept of 'transition' as an event in a specific time period
 6. Promote pride in the achievements of the children and young people of Walsall
 7. Secure better communication between frontline staff in all agencies that support children and families
 8. Reduce the impact of child poverty

- Working with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health on shared commissioning priorities for children and young people

At its meeting on 24 September the CYP Board agreed its terms of reference and strategy management approach for Board endorsement along with identifying key elements of a partnership scorecard.

The CYP Plan will be presented to full Council at its meeting on 18 November.

1.3 The Health and Well-Being Board

At its September meeting the Board reviewed the Commissioning Plans of Walsall's CCG and Public Health to provide assurance that commissioners are taking proper account of the priorities identified through the JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Analysis) and agreed in the Joint Health and Well-Being Strategy, including those relating to improved outcomes for children and young people.

The Board also received the Walsall Winterbourne View review of learning and action.

2. **Capacity, capability and culture**

2.1 Better together for Children – vision and ambition for Children's Services

The principles, values and ambitions for children and young people across Walsall continues to be communicated and endorsed in practice across the council and across the partnership through face-to-face conversations, briefings, meetings, presentations and engagement sessions. The August and early September focus of both the staff and partner engagement sessions and the September 'Good to be working with you' communication has been on 'Our Ofsted, Our next steps' to ensure follow up on sustaining successes and addressing improvement actions, as well as using the learning from both the Ofsted process and findings to ensure readiness for internal and external review and inspection across other aspects of Children's Services, including Fostering, Adoption, Children in Care, Children's Homes, Children's Centres, Support for School Improvement and the Youth Justice Service. This has been supplemented by emerging learning from the single inspection framework initial pilots.

The October focus will be on 'Early Help, Early on' to ensure that practitioners and partners know how needs can be matched to services and ways to access help and support are understood and evidence informed. Working in partnership with Walsall College, the staff engagement sessions will be recorded by students and available online to ensure a wide reach out across the partnership.

2.2 Early Help Developments

The Early Help Strategy development group have been meeting during August and September to progress the framework for the Early Help Strategy. There is

good sign up of partners at the appropriate level to support the Strategy developments. The group have identified an independent chair, Sue Egersdorff (a consultant supporting early years education and early help), to allow for all partners to contribute equally and be appropriately challenged. Partnership includes health, education, police, supported housing, children's centres, specialist services. A number of work strands are being progressed as part of the strategic framework - this includes data analysing, pathway planning, quality assurance, 'voice' of children and young people and families and a communication plan.

Work has progressed to ensure a tracking system is in place to capture the impact of Walsall's Strengthening Families (Troubled Families) programme, through purchasing the 'Illy' computer system. Colleagues liaised with other authorities who have implemented the system (including Wolverhampton and Dudley) to capture lessons learned and consider this in our implementation with partners. Partner workshops and training are taking place in October.

A step down protocol is being developed as well as a related communication plan to ensure effective implementation as from October 2013.

Work is underway for the development and implementation of a quality assurance and performance framework for Early Help. The elements of the framework will include:

- Monitoring end of interventions
- Distance travelled tool
- Tracking of the child/family including step up to CPP/LAC
- Cost benefit analysis
- Case audits/observed practice
- Customer satisfaction including compliments and complaints.

The partnership is also exploring the development of a Kite Mark for early help services setting out clear quality standards and getting children, young people and their families involved in inspection framework for this Kite Mark.

2.3 Improvement Notice: six month review

A key focus of the DfE six month review (reported to Scrutiny last month) was on exploring the Council's exiting arrangements from the Improvement Notice and these, together with the DfE notes of the meeting are attached at **Appendix A**. Subsequently the Minister has now written to the Leader welcoming the progress and the outcome of the Ofsted inspection and indicating both the actions and the timing for the lifting of the Improvement Notice, and, together with the Leader's reply, is also attached at **Appendix B**.

- 2.4 The attached DfE Improvement Board adviser is spending time with practitioners, managers and partners discussing their contributions to the journey of children and young people in Walsall from needing to receiving help including statutory intervention. He spent a day on 27 September with a focus on 'early help, early on' and the second day on 7 October will look at the way we safeguard and protect children and young people.

2.5 Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP)

Progress against the SIP is reported in the new accompanying SIP Scorecard (**Appendix C**) The focus of work since the last Scrutiny meeting has been on ensuring secure implementation of the quality assurance arrangements; drilling down into worker level performance data to improve outcomes for children and sharpening the underpinning SIP delivery plans.

2.6 Children and Young People's (CYP) Scrutiny Panel

Details of the focus of the CYP Scrutiny panel activity are reported to the Improvement Board. The focus of the August meeting was on assessing progress against the recommendations in the Scrutiny 'Safeguarding in Walsall' working group report, published in May 2013 and also on reviewing the recent Ofsted inspection of the Local Authority arrangements for the protection of children.

The September meeting included a presentation and discussion about performance management system principles and reporting, resulting in agreement about how to take this forward, including a concise, prioritised scorecard for Scrutiny to ensure robust oversight across Children's Services and a programme of areas for further investigation and Member involvement. This approach from Scrutiny will complement the developing scorecards for WSCB, CYP Board and the Corporate Parenting Group.

Other items discussed included the DCS improvement overview report, the 2013 provisional test and examination results for children and young people, across early years to post 16 and home education in Walsall.

2.7 Audit Committee

Audit Committee received a report at its meeting on 2 September on the recent Ofsted report and progress against post Ofsted actions and the actions set out in the Improvement Notice. The Committee has also invited the Chair of the Improvement Board to its meeting on 11 November 2013.

2.8 Walsall Council

A report on safeguarding progress and improvement across Children's Services, and including the recent Ofsted inspection, was discussed at the full Council meeting on 23 September.

2.9 Changes to Children and Young People Services

A comprehensive programme of change and improvement is being implemented across Children's Services, designed to move towards a more efficient and effective service model from 2014/15. This approach is driven by the parallel requirement to improve the quality and effectiveness of practice and service provision and to address resource pressures at both a national and local level. The reshaping of Children and Young People's Services is critically informed by some significant challenges. These include:

- An intensive focus on sustaining hard-won improvements to the quality of safeguarding and child protection services
- Tackling a notable increase in the numbers of children and young people looked after by the local authority, with associated cost pressures
- Integrating education and school improvement functions into the organisation following transition from a substantial outsourced contract in 2013.
- Ensuring smooth succession to a permanent and stable leadership team following a sustained period of interim leadership.
- Building the social work workforce, reducing agency staff and embedding good quality frontline practice.

Key elements of our reshaped service model include:

- Strengthened performance management and quality assurance, underpinned by robust and reliable data at both a strategic and operational level. This will inform analysis of impact and will drive decisions on how to make the most effective use of finite resources.
- Integrated commissioning with a primary focus on improved outcomes, early help and preventative intervention to progressively reduce the demand for more resource-intensive support.
- A productive partnership with schools that reflects the changing role of the local authority in driving school improvement, including sustainable and impactful school to school improvement and educational attainment.
- Implementation of a bold workforce development strategy to improve the stability of operational staffing and the quality of frontline practice. There will be a specific focus on building a strong permanent workforce and reducing the reliance on agency staff – impacting on cost and efficiency.
- A stable and permanent senior leadership team to drive forward sustained improvement and the implementation of increasingly challenging cost efficiencies.

Action being taken to progressively move the organisation towards a more efficient and effective service model from 2014/15 includes the following:

- Appointment of a new senior leadership team is underway with a national recruitment campaign from mid-September. This is in addition to wider workforce development including staff recruitment to key operational posts.
- Significant and continuing improvements in the quality and reliability of performance and qualitative data to inform strategic and operational decision-making and resource allocation.

- Strengthening of governance and partnership arrangements with a reshaped Local Safeguarding Board, a Children and Young People's Partnership Board with clear priorities and robust Scrutiny and Corporate Parenting arrangements in place.
- Rigorous implementation of the Strategic Improvement Plan for Safeguarding. Under the oversight of the Improvement Board a wide and highly effective programme of action is being undertaken to address the quality and effectiveness of frontline practice, the quality of leadership and governance, and the capacity, capability and culture of children and young people's services.
- A programme management approach to tackling key resource pressures.

2.10 People Capacity

A recruitment process is now in hand for three Assistant Director posts, one for Access and Achievement, one for Early Help and Commissioning and one for Children's Social Care.

A report was presented to the Black Country Chief Executives by the DCS on behalf of the Black Country DCS, setting out proposals for a collective approach to the challenges to recruiting and retaining experienced social workers. The approach was accepted and the DCS group will now take forward.

Short listing took place for the Principal Social Worker on 30 September and the assessment centre is scheduled for the 11 October.

Interviews took place for the WSCB Board Manager post on 23 July and was offered and accepted by the successful candidate the same day. She will start on 21 October.

Following unsuccessful recruitment campaigns already reported to this board an interim LADO, took up post on 2 September. There is a current recruitment process for the permanent position.

The second attempt to recruit a permanent Team Manager for the Children with Disabilities Team has not been successful. We are liaising with HR about the possibility of readvertising with a market supplement to attract high calibre applicants. A long-standing Interim Manager remains in post.

3. Quality and Effectiveness of front line practice

- 3.1 Following the Research in Practice (RiP) workshop in June, we are developing an Evidence Informed Practice Strategy due for completion and sign off in early October. We are also promoting EiP through a presentation to front line teams, a series of coffee and conversation sessions to support and disseminate practice.

A mapping of RiP resources against our key improvement areas is attached at **Appendix D.**

- 3.2 The September performance score card sets out progress, performance and priorities. The Improvement Board also receive a detailed data compendium and exception report. A scrutiny member briefing on Quality Assurance and performance intelligence takes place on 7 October.
- 3.3 Management action has been taken to strengthen joint work to safeguard children and young people between the Children with Disabilities Team and the Safeguarding and Family Support teams. The CWD Team is being supported by a training programme to enhance their practice skills through September.
- 3.4 Work is underway to prepare front line teams for the implementation of the Family Justice Review on 7 October.
- 3.5 Work to implement the findings of the Permanence/Adoption Diagnostic is taking place in the Fostering and Adoption Service, supported by consultants from Core Assets.
- 3.6 A deep dive audit is being undertaken on Initial Assessments leading to NFAs, reporting to the Assistant Director, Specialist Services, will commence in the week beginning 7 October.
- 3.7 Implementing material improvements to the PARIS system is a continuing priority, with significant progress anticipated for report to the October Improvement Board.

4. Notable improvements this period

- 4.1 Key improvements in this period include:
- Improved robustness and reliability of strategic performance data
 - Initiation of commissioning process for ICS system
 - Access, referral and reporting arrangements are increasingly effective at our Social Care Front Door
 - Improved working environment at the Quest

5. Priorities in the next reporting period

The key priorities in the next month are:

- 5.1 Improving the quality of partnerships and governance
- Work with the chair of WSCB to embed improvements to the Board's function, operation and impact to ensure the Board is able to hold agencies robustly to account on their safeguarding responsibilities
 - Focus the work of the Corporate Parenting Group so it can effectively fulfil its role and responsibilities for children in care
- 5.2 Capacity, capability and culture
- Work to embed strengthened performance management and quality assurance arrangements, including self assessment and inspection readiness and the planned audit of initial assessments leading to no further social care action
 - Agree mutual accountabilities with Police

- Workforce planning, including reshaping the directorate and reducing reliance on agency workers
- Focus on implications of new single inspection framework for the partnership

5.3 Quality and effectiveness of frontline practice

- Consistency and impact of front line social care practice with specific focus on embedding key messages of:
 - ensuring children are seen alone and their voices and views are heard and taken into account
 - reflective supervision is a right and a responsibility
- Ensuring fair and equitable workloads
- Drive forward the implementation of early help provision to better match and meet needs

6. **Risks to Delivery**

6.1 The risk register is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Operations Group and new issues or risks requiring Improvement Board attention are highlighted here. The full risk register is available to all Improvement Board Members on request.

6.2 Current risks to bring to the attention of the Improvement Board are:

- Alignment of PARIS, the ICS system, with practice change priorities, including the child's voice and views and their journey, in the context of the developing regulatory framework
- Ensuring a shared understanding and practice of accountabilities with the Police
- Failure to appoint to key posts across the Directorate, potential to compromise the pace of practice improvements and a timely and effective transition to permanent Senior Leadership Team.

Author

Rose Collinson

Interim Executive Director, Children's Services

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Appendix A - Council's exiting arrangements from the Improvement Notice and DfE notes of 6 month review meeting

Appendix B1 - Letter from the Minister to the Leader

Appendix B2 - Leader's reply to the Minister

Appendix C - SIP scorecard

Appendix D - A mapping of RiP resources

Report to Improvement Board

September 2013

**Assurance to DfE to Inform Ministerial Advice
on Lifting of Improvement Notice**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Improvement Board with an update on action taken by the Council to provide DfE with assurance that continuous improvement to safeguarding services remains a critical and embedded priority for the authority following the recent Ofsted inspection.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following an 'adequate' Ofsted judgement from the recent inspection of local authority services for the protection of children, and the subsequent DfE review in Walsall on 21st August, the Council have submitted a letter of assurance to the DfE. This is in direct response to an invitation from the DfE for Walsall to set out proposed arrangements to support an exit from the Improvement Notice.
- 2.2 This letter sets out the current effective local arrangements for securing robust oversight and sustained momentum of delivery of the Strategic Improvement Plan for safeguarding in Walsall. The letter proposes some additional measures and provides the basis for DfE advice to the Minister on moving towards a lifting of the Improvement Notice. A copy of the letter is attached.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 The Director of Children's Services will continue to liaise directly with DfE colleagues to provide assurance on SIP implementation. There will be a particular emphasis on securing strong transition arrangements to a new permanent senior leadership structure to drive improvement action from early 2014.

4. Action for Improvement Board

- 4.1 The Improvement Board are asked to endorse this report and proposed next steps.
- 4.2 The Improvement Board are asked to consider the potential for reducing the frequency of Improvement Board meetings in the lead-up to the lifting of the Improvement Notice.

Rose Collinson
Interim Executive Director of Children's Services

September 2013



Walsall Council

Paul Sheehan
Chief Executive

Our Ref: PS/RC/ML
Date: 5 September 2013
Direct Line: 01922 652006
Please ask for:

Ms Rachael Davies
Ground Floor
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Dear Rachael,

Further to our DfE review meeting held in Walsall on 21 August, we are writing to set out for you our local assurance arrangements for continuing action to secure sustainable improvement across Walsall Children's Services. In addition to the current established and effective arrangements we are also proposing some additional elements to support our movement towards 'good' services and the lifting of the Improvement Notice in Walsall. We would welcome your views on our proposals which we hope will be helpful for informing your feedback to the Minister.

Firstly, we would like to thank you for the positive and constructive approach that Jane Hopkinson and her DfE colleagues have consistently demonstrated throughout the improvement process. The clear, candid and timely style of support and challenge has been very much appreciated by partners in Walsall and has enabled us to focus energy and resources on embedding critical improvement activity. We look forward to working with Paul Harper to take forward the next phase of this work.

Whilst we are of course pleased to have secured an 'adequate' judgment from the recent Ofsted inspection, we are acutely aware of the continuing challenges we face. We are firmly committed to sustaining the momentum of service improvement and to progressively sharpening the focus of our activity to ensure improved outcomes for children and young people in Walsall.

The Council and the wider partnership are confident that our self-awareness as an organisation is robust and reliable. This was key to the action we have taken since the Improvement Notice was served in November 2012, and was reflected and affirmed by Ofsted. This means we are well-positioned now to target resources and action on those areas of the business that are pivotal to achieving safe and sustainable long-term improvements to the quality and impact of our work with children and young people.

Our current assurance arrangements include the following elements:

1. Regular scheduled meetings (reflecting the updated *Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the DCS and LMCS*) between the Director of Children's Services, the Lead Member and other key Elected Members, the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Safeguarding Board to review and challenge performance, to hold partners to account, to tackle obstacles to progress and to identify critical interdependencies. This dialogue is actively supported by key partnerships including the independently chaired Local Safeguarding Children Board, the Children & Young People's Partnership chaired by the DCS, and Council Scrutiny arrangements and the Corporate Parenting Group, now chaired by the Lead Member.
2. Rapidly improving quality and reliability of performance data which is used to inform decision-making and management action at all levels of the organisation. This has been supported by the appointment of a well-regarded data specialist who is working across Children's Services to develop robust and sustainable arrangements for performance management and quality assurance.
3. Implementation of the priorities set out in our 'Phase 2' Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) for Safeguarding, supported by operational delivery plans which incorporate learning from the most recent Ofsted inspection. The SIP also anticipates the forthcoming single inspection framework. A new performance scorecard for the SIP provides a high-level summary of performance and informs a forensic drill-down into areas requiring improvement. This provides a strong framework which is improving outcomes for children and young people in Walsall by tackling critical service improvements which include:
 - Staffing & workforce development issues (including the balance of agency staff, recruitment & retention)
 - Staff sickness absence levels
 - The quality and timeliness of initial assessments

In addition to embedding these established assurance and oversight arrangements we are proposing to take the following action:

- To agree to undertake with appropriate partners and peer authorities a detailed 'deep-dive' analysis of performance in specific key areas of improvement on at least three occasions during the next 12 months.
- To commission an individual from within the sector who has the endorsement of DfE and the experience, personal and professional credibility and gravitas to champion children and young people and to challenge process and decision-

making. This will provide an additional element of independent expertise and assurance to the Local Safeguarding Board and Children & Young People's Partnership.

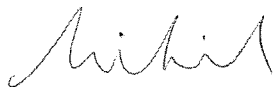
We would welcome thoughts from DfE colleagues on how we might work together to action these two additional elements in a way that will strengthen the existing substantive assurance arrangements in Walsall.

We are currently placing a particular emphasis on putting in place substantive leadership arrangements in readiness for early 2014. Our action on succession planning is well underway with key Assistant Director posts out for advert during September, leading to full implementation of a permanent senior team in early 2014.

Coupled with action to strengthen our Children's Information System these developments are critical to creating a strong platform for achieving long-term sustained improvements to outcomes for children, young people and their families in Walsall, backed by firm cross-party support from across the Council.

Many thanks again for your support and please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide any further information to inform your thinking at this stage.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Mike Bird
Leader of the Council



Paul Sheehan
Chief Executive



Edward Timpson MP
 Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
 Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
 tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Dear Mike,

13 September 2013

I was pleased to see the outcome of the July 2013 Ofsted inspection of child protection arrangements in Walsall which judged child protection services in Walsall to now be adequate.

I can see that the Council has secured significant improvements in the quality of service provided to children, young people and their families within Walsall. In particular, I welcome the progress which means that children who are at risk of harm are better protected by effective initial screening and prompt action. I note that the inspection report remarks on the dedication of elected members working with senior management in Walsall to drive the change.

The report from the Improvement Board Chair, written before the inspection, supports the Ofsted findings, and highlights the improvements in planning, performance information and the quality of partnership and governance arrangements. The self-assessment undertaken by the Council in preparation for the DfE 6 month review set out an honest account of achievement, outcomes and priorities going forward with ambition beyond the adequate findings of the Ofsted inspection.

Overall I would like to congratulate you and your staff on your progress. I am sure though that you will agree that your Strategic Improvement Plan has some significant activity still to be delivered to ensure that the improvements you have made are fully embedded and sustainable and that the outcomes are evidenced in performance data.

With that in mind I have decided to keep the current Improvement Notice in place until I can be sure that the improvements in Walsall have been fully secured. I have asked my officials to conduct a further review at 12 months to assess the evidence for lifting the notice and formally ending the intervention. I would also like the Improvement Board Chair, Chris Spencer, to write a final report to me at this time on the implementation of the Strategic Improvement Plan and the impact of service improvements. Officials will request this

separately.

I am copying this letter to Rose Collinson (Executive Director), Rachel Andrew (Portfolio Holder for Children's Services) and Paul Sheehan (Chief Executive).

Yours sincerely,
Edward.

Edward Timpson MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families



Walsall Council

Councillor Mike Bird FICM
Leader of the Council

Mr E Timpson, MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Children and Families
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
Westminster
London SW1P 3BT

30 September 2013

Dear *Edward*

**COPY FOR YOUR
INFORMATION**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE WALSALL COUNCIL	
Received	<i>30.9.13</i>
REFER TO	<i>Ruby/Rose</i>

Thank you for your letter in response to Walsall's recent Ofsted inspection and the DfE review last month.

We are pleased with the progress and impact that you, Ofsted, the Improvement Board Chair and your officials have recognised and affirmed in our work to secure sustainable improvement across Walsall's Children's Services. We remain aware of the continuing challenges we still face. We are firmly committed to sustaining the momentum of service improvement and to progressively sharpening the focus of our activity to ensure improved outcomes for children and young people in Walsall.

I am confident that the Council and the wider Walsall partnership's self-awareness is robust and reliable and we are now well positioned and active in targeting resources and actions on those areas of business that are pivotal to achieving safe and sustainable long term improvements to the quality and impact of our work with children and young people. The developments set out in our recent letter about our exiting arrangements to your officials, including our current activity to put in place substantive leadership arrangements in readiness for early 2014, our established assurance and oversight arrangements and action to strengthen our Children's Information System, provide a strong platform for achieving long-term sustained improvements to outcomes for children, young people and families in Walsall, backed by firm cross-party support from across the Council.

I hope you will come and visit Walsall and see this for yourself and formally end the intervention before Christmas 2013, confident that it has contributed to oversight of secure and sustainable improvements for children across Walsall.

Yours sincerely

Mike
Councillor Mike Bird
Leader of the Council

Leader's Office, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall WS1 1TW
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

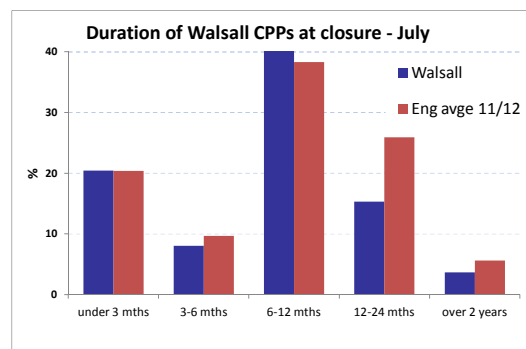
PA: Donna Baker, Tel: 01922 653238 Fax: 01922 644730 Textphone: 0845 111 2910 Email: bakerd@walsall.gov.uk
Home: 'Hawk's Ridge', 54 Charlemont Road, Walsall, West Midlands WS5 3NQ Tel: 01922 644450 Mobile: 07973 509835

Early help measures are developed and awaited for implementation on Paris to enable reporting.
Qualitative measures are developed and awaiting agreement.

1.0 OUTCOMES - Service Users

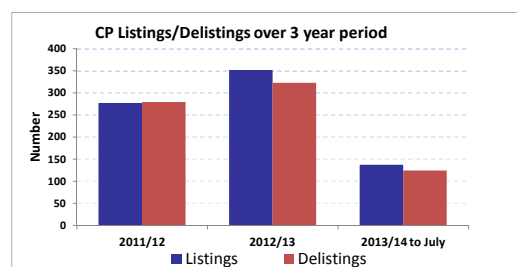
Charts for selected areas

(Intervention duration as proxy for quality)	Eng Ave Mar 12	Mar-13	Jul-13
Duration of CPP 2+ years at closure (%) [SB]	5.6	6.5	3.6
Duration of CiN Episode 2+ years at closure (%) [SB]	9.2	5.54	tba
Rate of offences against under 18 CYP in Walsall as a % of WM total [SB]	n/a	8.4	annual data
Fewer reported offences against children than expected for population size (9.8% of WM total). Work is underway to close CPPs and CiN where safe and relevant to do so. This causes a short term increase in 2+ year closure figures, but ensures caseloads become more manageable and prioritised.			
Accidental and deliberate injuries - admission to hospital [SB]	124.3	96	published June 2014
This measure combines safeguarding and safety from accidents. Rate equates to 609 admissions; working with health colleagues to receive in year data and earlier published data			

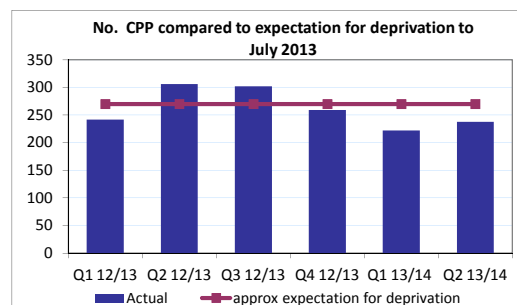


2.0 OUTPUTS

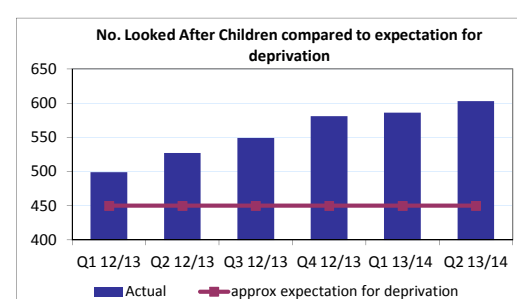
Child Protection Plans	Mar-12	Mar-13	Yr to date 13/14
No. Child Protection Plans (CPP) at the end of year	230	251	238
No. de-listed during the year	248	334	137
No listed during the year	255	355	124
The number of CPPs lies below the level expected for income related child poverty levels.			



Repeat CPPs	Eng Ave Mar 12	Mar-13	Jul-13
Second or subsequent CPP in 2 yrs since a CPP (%) [SB]	13.8	10.4	22.7
10-15% is considered as ideal. Walsall's rate has remained good, indicating appropriate caution levels. There has been a rise in 13/14, in particular in July. The performance team is analysing the detail behind this data prior to sharing findings with service managers.			

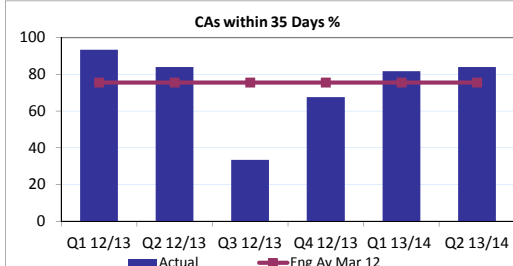
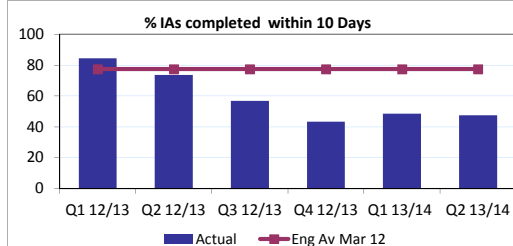


S47s and ICPCs	Mar-12	Mar-13	YTD Jul 13
Section 47 number of assessments carried out	491	722	333
Number of ICPCs	484	402	144
% of ICPC resulting in a Child Protection Plan (CPP)	n/a	87	88.2
The number of S47 assessments and ICPCs has decreased and the % ICPCs resulting in CPPs has increased. Work is underway to ensure that this is as a result of effective identification and early help.			



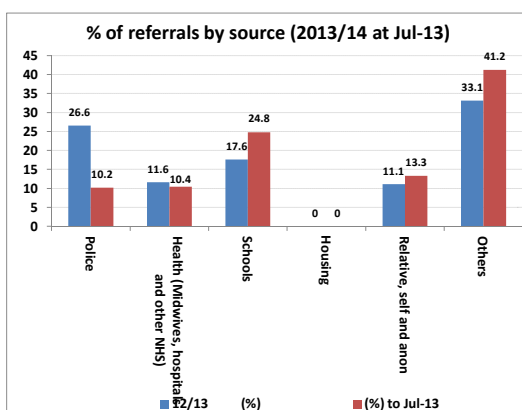
3.0 PROCESSES

CPP reviews	Eng Avge Mar 12	Mar-13	YTD July 13
★ CPP reviews within timescales [BB]	96.7	97	98.2
The July outturn equates to 165 out of 168 reviews in timescale.			
Assessment Timeliness	Eng Avge Mar 12	Mar-13	Jul-13
▲ % Initial Assessments (IA) completed in less than 10 days [BB]	77.4	64.9	47.5
★ % Core Assessments (CA) completed in less than 35 days [BB]	75.5	64.7	83.9
Work has been undertaken to improve the data quality around timeliness and worker level reports are ready to support supervision. This a priority area for action by teams.			

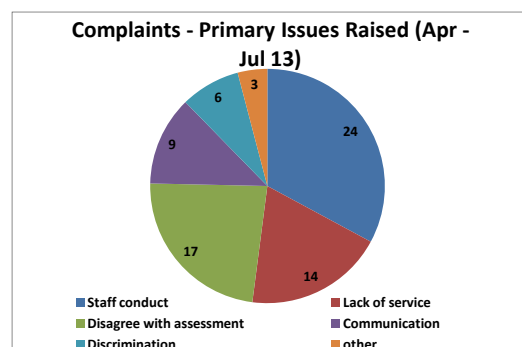


Walsall Children's Improvement board Sept - 3 page scorecard

Agency understanding of thresholds and participation			
Source of Referral	12/13 (%)	(%) to Jul-13	% NFAd (13/14 at Jul-13)
Police	26.6	10.2	7.4
Health (Midwives, hospitals and other NHS)	11.6	10.4	8.5
Schools	17.6	24.8	5.9
Housing	n/a	n/a	n/a
Relative, self and anon	11.1	13.3	6.0
Others	33.1	41.2	11.0
Communications with and to partners about the new referral system through the MAST Team and re-inforcement of thresholds is underway at present. Audits suggest the current threshold understanding is generally good - this will be built on further.			



Complaints	Mar-13	YTD July 13
Complaints Stage 1	116	73
Complaints Stage 2	8	3
Complaints Stage 3	0	0
Of the stage 1 complaints the largest category related to staff conduct. Breakdown by subject area and examination of potential learning from these is underway. There has been a comparable rise in the number of complaints overall so far this year compared with 12/13.		



4.0 INPUT

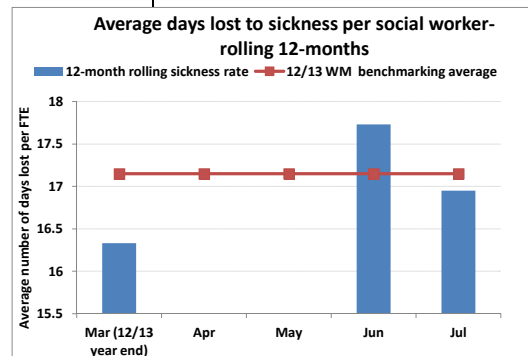
Early Help	May '13	June 13	Jul-13
CAFs (and from Apr 13, early help assessments) received	45	48	34
Cases stepped up to Level 3	12	8	29
Cases stepped down from Level 3	2	0	0

Early Help end measures going live 16 Sept:

- 1) Satisfactory outcomes achieved
 - 2) Case escalated
 - 3) Family disengaged
 - 4) Family moved away
 - 5) Referred on to a different service
 - 6) Child died / other exceptional reason
- The above will compliment the findings of the "distance travelled" tools being used in direct work with families

Staffing measures	2012/13	2013/14 to June	2013/14 to July
↗ % Social worker vacancies [SB]	14.4	19.82	26.01
↗ Sickness - average days lost per social worker / senior practitioner rolling 12 months [SB]	16.3	17.73	16.95
Nos. agency staff - SW, SP, TM's	54	60	54*
↗ % SW turnover - rolling 12 months [SB]	10.5	8.6	14.8
Av no. open CiN cases per worker, inc CiN, CPP and LAC	25.2	19.2	19.5
↗ % supervisions completed in timescale [BB]	80.5	87	75.8

The reported high caseload numbers are being examined further to ensure accuracy and to establish what proportion are active cases, what type, and to safely close any longer term "monitoring and review" type cases. * the July figure for agency staff is based on total number of hours worked by agency workers in the month converted into FTE posts (8813/ 162); previous months' figures are nos. agency workers employed at any time in the month. An audit of initial assessments with NFA is currently taking place to gain a clear understanding of thresholds.



Legend

Performance versus target band:
★ achieved or exceeded minimum standard
▲ Did not meet minimum standard

Note: in the data tables, unless specified otherwise (e.g. Eng Avge), all data relates to Walsall

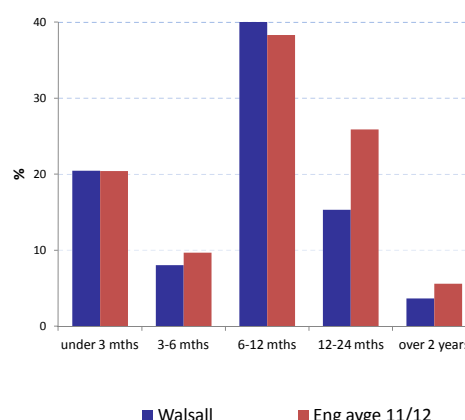
	Direction of travel from previous period
↗	improved in performance
↔	Maintained level
↘	deteriorated in performance
BB	bigger is better
SB	smaller is better

NB: Mar 2013 figures are draft and subject to change, statutory return submitted 30 June 2013 for Looked after children and finalisation by end July for Children in Need.

OUTCOMES - Service Users

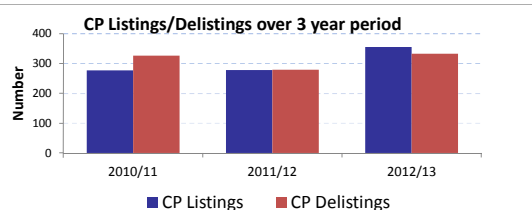
(Intervention duration as proxy for quality for now)		Eng Mar 12	Mar-13	Jun-13
🔍	Duration of CPP 2+ years at closure (%) [SB]	5.6	6.5	2.9
🔍	Duration of CiN Episode 2+ years at closure (%) [SB]	9.2	5.54	
★	Rate of offences against under 18 CYP in Walsall as a % of WM total [SB]	n/a	8.4	
Fewer reported offences against children than expected for				
	Accidental and deliberate injuries - admission to hospital [SB]	124.3	96	published June 2014
This measure combines safeguarding and safety from accidents. Rate equates to 609 admissions; working with health colleagues to receive in year data and earlier published data				

Duration of Walsall CPPs at closure 2012/13

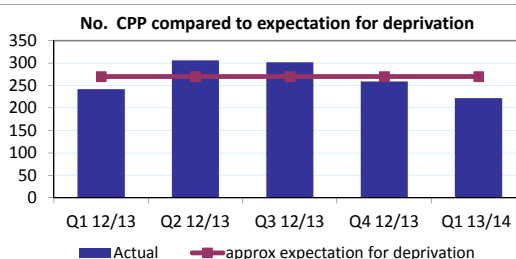


OUTPUTS

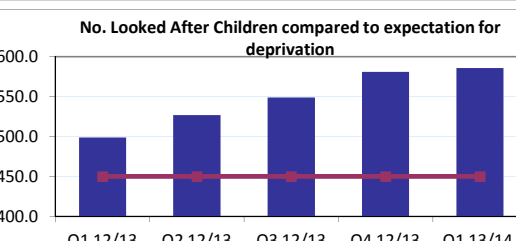
Child Protection Plans	Mar-12	Mar-13	Yr to date
No. Child Protection Plans (CPP)	230	251	222
No. de-listed during the year	248	334	104
No listed during the year	255	355	75
The number of CPPs lies just below the level expected for income related child poverty levels. Exploration of this compared to earlier and later stages of the system are being examined.			



Repeat CPPs	Eng Mar 12	Mar-12	Mar-13
★ Second or subsequent CPP in 2 yrs since a CPP (%) (SB)	13.8	10.5	10.4
10-15% is considered as ideal. Walsall's rate has remained good, indicating appropriate caution levels.			



S47s and ICPCs	Mar-12	Mar-13	YTD Jun 13
Section 47 number of	491	722	202
Number of ICPCs	484	402	81
% of ICPC resulting in a Child Protection Plan (CPP)	n/a	87	91.4
The number of S47 assessments and ICPCs has decreased and the % ICPCs resulting in CPPs has increased. Work is underway to			

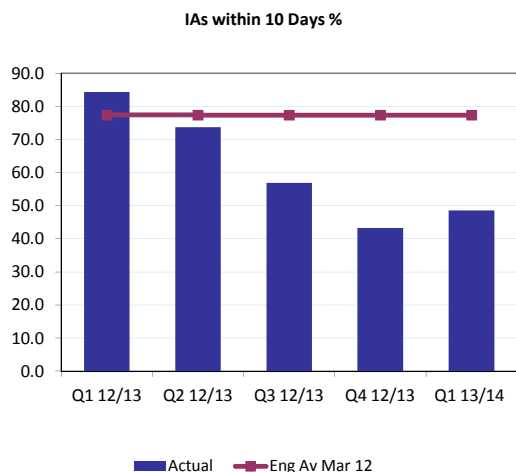


% for CS resulting in O/Ts has increased. Work is underway to ensure that this is as a result of effective identification and early help.

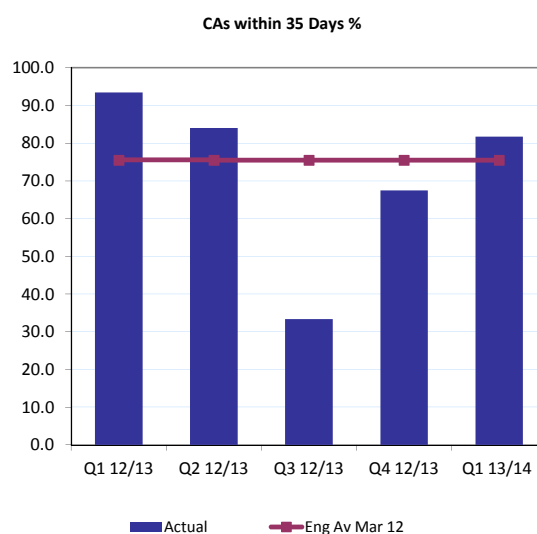
Q1 12/13 Q2 12/13 Q3 12/13 Q4 12/13 Q1 13/14
 Actual approx expectation for deprivation

PROCESSES

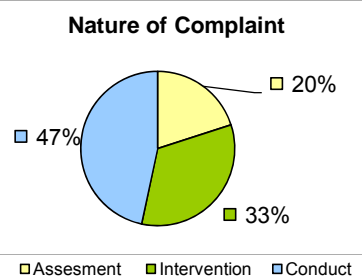
CPP reviews		Eng Mar 2012	Mar-13	YTD June 13
★	CPP reviews within timescales (BB)	96.7	97	100
Assessment Timeliness		Mar-12	Mar-13	Jun-13
▲	% Initial Assessments (IA) completed < 10 days (BB)	81.1	64.9	48.7
★	% Core Assessments (Cas) completed < 35 days (BB)	87.1	64.7	81.7
Work has been undertaken to improve the data quality around timeliness and worker level reports are ready to support supervision. This a priority area for action by teams.				



Agency understanding of thresholds and participation		
	12/13 % of refs	% of these NFAd
Police	26.6	16.0
Health (Midwives, hospitals and other NHS)	11.6	16.5
Schools	17.6	12.0
Housing	n/a	n/a
Relative, self and anon	11.1	13.8
Others	33.1	24.6
Communications with and to partners about the new referral system through the MAST Team and re-inforcement of thresholds is underway at present. Audits suggest the current threshold understanding is generally good - this will be built on further.		



Complaints (SB)	Mar-13	YTD June 13
Complaints Stage 1	116	54
Complaints Stage 2	8	3
Complaints Stage 3	0	0
There were 25 Stage 1 complaints in Apr 13 22 in May and 7 in		



INPUT

Early Help	April '13	May '13	June 13
CAFs (and from Apr 13, early	77	45	48
Cases stepped up to Level 3	7	12	4
Cases stepped down from Level	0	2	0

Staffing measures	2011/12	2012/13	Jun-13
% Social worker vacancies	n/a	14.4	19.82
Sickness - average days lost per	n/a	16.3	17.73
Nos. agency staff - SW, SP, TM's	n/a	54	60
% SW turnover - rolling 12	n/a	10.5	14.04
Av no. open CiN cases per	n/a	37	25.2*
% supervisions completed in time	n/a	80.5	87

The reported high caseload figure is being examined further to ensure accuracy and to establish what proportion are active cases, what type, and to safely close any longer term "monitoring and

Early Help end measures being developed:

- 1) Satisfactory outcomes achieved
- 2) Case escalated
- 3) Family disengaged
- 4) Family moved away
- 5) Referred on to a different service
- 6) Child died / other exceptional reason

The above will compliment the findings of the "distance travelled" tools being used in direct work with families

Legend

Performance versus target band:
★ achieved or exceeded minimum standard
▲ Did not meet minimum standard

Direction of travel from previous period
↗ improved in performance
↔ Maintained level
↘ deteriorated in performance
BB bigger is better
SB smaller is better