

14 January 2014

Children's Services Improvement Activity

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R Andrew – Children's Services

Executive Summary:

This report provides the latest performance information and commentary, including a full set of the reports submitted to the DfE 12 month review on 3 December 2013, 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 progress and impact of the strategic activity to date and the direction of travel outlined in the Improvement Plan and performance report.

Background papers:

Minutes from Children and Young People's Scrutiny and Performance Panel meetings in August, September, October, November 2012, January, February and March, July, September, October and November 2013.

Ofsted Reports:

Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services published July 2012
Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children published August 2013

Improvement Notice – published November 2012.

Exchange of letters between the Leader of the Council and the Minister.

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

Sustainable improvements to Children's Services are designed to ensure the partnership works "*better together for children and young people*" in Walsall so that children and young people 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 6 weekly basis. This is in addition to developing service and partnership wide performance management and quality assurance arrangements. The Department for Education (DfE) also assess and evaluate progress and impact on a 6 monthly basis. The (delayed) 6 month review took place in August 2013 and the 12 month review took place in December 2013. The reviews include written reports from the independent chair of the Improvement Board, fieldwork by the DfE as well as other supporting evidence, including self evaluation, external review and inspection.

The framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and reviews of Local Safeguarding Children Boards has now been published. This sets a higher bar for all regulated services:

- Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers (single inspection framework) and reviews of Local Safeguarding Children Boards:
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/results/130216>
- Inspection handbook: inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and reviews of Local Safeguarding Children Boards:
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/results/120218>

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. Key messages go out monthly to social care teams. 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 and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Rose Collinson – interim Director, Children's Services

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1. Summary of progress since last report

1.1 DfE 12 Month Review

The programme for the DfE 12 Month Review on 3 December included a direct dialogue with operational and management staff, Improvement Board Chair and representatives and Council members.

Specific advance information was submitted to DfE as requested and is attached. This includes:

- A summary overview of our progress and next steps (**Appendix 1**)
- A further report of supporting information on key performance priorities (**Appendix 2**)
- A report from the Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board (**Appendix 3**)

2. Additional Information for Scrutiny Panel Members

The following information is provided for Panel Members to complement the DfE reports.

2.1 Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) Update

The latest update to the SIP benefits from increasingly robust and systematic performance management and scorecard arrangements. There is significant positive movement towards 'Green' in the large majority of areas, founded on a clear and consistent evidence base. There remain a small number of priorities with an 'Amber' rating. Where this is the case we have firm plans for securing the momentum and focus required to deliver required outcomes. Throughout the SIP we are increasingly confident that we can demonstrate a good understanding of areas where we are not moving with the required pace, and that action is in place to swiftly target resources to progressively improve. A performance scorecard is attached at **Appendix 4**.

2.2 Workforce and Staffing Issues

Interviews for the posts of Assistant Director: Early Help, Commissioning and Workforce and Assistant Director: Access and Achievement were held on 4 and 5 December respectively, with a stakeholder day for both posts on 2 December, involving interviews with children and meeting with partners and appointments were made to both posts.

We have been successful in recruiting to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer). The LADO is an officer in any local authority with responsibility for acting and advising on safeguarding concerns in respect of people whose employment brings them into contact with children. The appointee is currently working with the NSPCC and will take up the post on 27 January 2014 and robust interim arrangements are in place until then.

Current recruitment activity is focused on recruitment to the posts of Assistant Director Children's Social Care and the Principal Social Worker. As above robust interim arrangements are in place.

A breakfast briefing about opportunities to work in children's social care in Walsall on 25 November attracted about 80 potential applicants and very positive and comprehensive media coverage. Social work, senior practitioner and team manager posts are now out for advert with assessment centres and interviews planned for the New Year.

'Early Help' open fortnight took place in December across teams in Walsall. Teams in Children's Centres, Area Family Support teams, Parenting, Integrated Youth Support, the MAST and more opened their doors so colleagues and partners could find out more about the support and services to ensure early help, early on for children and families.

Following consultation with the public, stakeholders and partners, work is progressing to reshape Children's Centres in Walsall to develop Area Early Help Clusters that will oversee and coordinate the delivery of Early Help services in each of the 6 Area Partnerships in Walsall. The objective of this change is to deliver a reshaped children centre offer for children and their families in the borough that is fit for purpose, integral to Early Help, sustainable and affordable. Engagement sessions with Children Centre Managers agreed a set of important principles that are being used to guide and shape our future model of delivery. These are:

- Needs led with maximum impact
- Integral to the Early Help Offer in Walsall
- Fit for purpose to deliver national and local priorities
- Sustainable model and funding formula based
- Delivered through existing network of Children Centre sites as a minimum
- Maintain frontline delivery that meets core purpose
- A locality model that reflects Area Partnerships and partners geographic localities
- Affordable
- Inclusive and reflective of diverse community
- Retain flexibility, creativity and innovation

The aim is to implement the new model from 1 April 2014. A more detailed report about children's centres is on this Scrutiny agenda.

2.3 Children and Young People's Plan

The Children and Young People Partnership met on 26 November to endorse the Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) and to scrutinise and offer challenge to each priority sponsor on impact and progress against each of the delivery plans.

Following Scrutiny, the CYPP went to Cabinet in December and will be presented to Council in January. 'Our Plan, Our Promise to Children' has been the focus of the November and December engagement sessions and of the November 'Good to be Working with you' so that key stakeholders are clear what our partnership priorities are and how they can contribute to realising them for children and young people. The 'Good to be Working with you' communications for November and December are attached, for information (**Appendix 5**).

Additionally at the Partnership Board meeting, partners endorsed the Early Help Strategy, provided challenge on some of the detailed operational plans and sought clarity about the role and function of the early help advisory group going forward.

The Board also signed off the Active Involvement Strategy and delivery plan for strengthening the voice of children and young people in the work of the partnership.

2.4 Scrutiny Arrangements

The Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel met on the 26 November to review Children's Services improvement activity, scrutinise performance through the scorecard and exception report, which focused on timeliness and quality of initial assessments and on school improvement, offer comment and challenge on the Children's Services 2014-5 budget proposals, receive a presentation on and scrutinise the Children and Young People Plan and receive an update from the Scrutiny Task Group looking at children in care.

3. Risk Management

The risk register is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Operations Group and new issues or risks requiring Improvement Board attention were highlighted:

- 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. Mitigation of this risk is a key focus of the PARIS Board.
- 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. Mitigation of this risk is kept under review through Chief Executive and Member oversight and by the Children's Services Leadership team. It is essential that efforts to make appointments focus on securing a high quality calibre of candidates.
- Failure to make the necessary efficiencies either in year or as planned as part of the Council budget proposals for 2014-15. Mitigation of this risk is via ongoing monitoring and scrutiny of revenue and capital budgets.
- Ensuring that a rigorous and forensic approach to self-evaluation is sustained with a renewed vigour that fully reflects the raised criteria in the new Ofsted framework and related regulatory developments. Mitigation of this is by mainstreaming and embedding the approach to self evaluation used to support children's social care improvements across Children's Services more widely.
- Securing the active and continuing engagement of health professionals on site in the MAST arrangements. Reduction in Health input will present a significant risk to maintaining quality and impact for children and young people. Mitigation of this risk is through challenge to the CCG to ensure an active and consistent engagement in the MAST arrangements.

Author

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Appendix 1 – A summary overview of our progress and next steps

Appendix 2 – A further report of supporting information on key performance priorities

Appendix 3 – A report from the Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board

Appendix 4 – Performance Scorecard

Appendix 5 – Good to be working with you – November and December 2013



‘Better Together For Children’

**Moving Towards Good
Safeguarding
& Child Protection Services in
Walsall**

**Summary Overview Of
Our Progress & Next Steps**

**Report & Presentation to DfE
3rd December 2013**



Walsall Council

Our Story At 12 Months

This summary report supports a slide presentation and is accompanied by a performance report which provides a more detailed account of progress in specific areas of most concern to DfE.

We will share with you ...

'How we are transforming our improvement activity into core business throughout the partnership and across Children's Services'

- 1.1 The serving of the Improvement Notice in 2012 provided the political and organisational focus and momentum for an intensive programme of change and service development within Safeguarding and Child Protection Services. The governance and leadership arrangements that were put in place to secure strong grip and oversight of the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) drew in the wider partnership and have been informed by increasingly robust performance management arrangements.
- 1.2 This framework has delivered on significant improvements to the quality of practice with increasing evidence of better safeguarding outcomes for children and young people in Walsall.
- 1.3 With our ambitions targeted firmly on moving towards a sustainable judgement of 'good' across all of our services, we have progressively woven our safeguarding improvement activity into the core business of Children's Services and the wider partnership. Our primary focus is on the child and young person's whole journey through support from needing to receiving help, and to moving on to better outcomes and life chances. In order to achieve this, our safeguarding improvements are increasingly driven forward and embedded into the whole continuum of Children's Services and Partnership provision in Walsall.
- 1.4 To reflect this approach, in planning for 2014/15 we are widening the three Improvement Plan themes as a sustainable framework for transforming the full range of Children's Services provision.

'How we will secure our achievements on a long-term sustainable basis as part of the wider development of the full range of services provided by the Council and our partners'

- 1.5 We have achieved major improvements in the strategic oversight, ownership and accountability arrangements for Children's Services under the auspice of the Improvement Notice. The strengthened Children and Young People's Partnership, the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board and developing Health and Well-Being Board, informed by increasingly robust and reliable performance data, provide a robust framework for picking up and sustaining the focus, momentum and challenge which has been provided by the Improvement Board.
- 1.6 We believe as a partnership that we are now in a strong position to take on this responsibility. In doing so, we will maintain a sharp focus on safeguarding improvement priorities within the context of the wider development of the full range of Children's Services.
- 1.7 The integration of Education and School Improvement functions into the Council, following a longstanding outsourced model, coupled with an emphasis on achieving a step-change in our approach to Commissioning and Workforce Development, and the provision of an ambitious Early Help offer creates an exciting and dynamic platform for transforming service quality, impact and outcomes for children and young people in Walsall.

'Action we are taking as a partnership to tackle the challenges we still face'

- 1.8 Whilst we are proud of the step-change we have achieved over the last 12 months, we face continuing challenges and are acutely aware of the need to maintain a relentless and forensic focus on driving forward our safeguarding improvement priorities. This is particularly critical in the midst of a wide programme of organisational change, both for the Council and our partners. Our performance management, data and quality assurance arrangements, including an increasingly dynamic self-assessment process, are giving us the information we need to build on our improvements and to drill-down into areas of weakness, enabling a clear focus for action.
- 1.9 We are undertaking a phased and measured approach, with strong Member and partnership oversight, to strengthening and stabilising our leadership and management arrangements. Our incoming leadership team will be overseen by the Interim Executive Director with a critical focus on maintaining and building on our achievements to date, mindful of the risks associated with changes to leadership at this crucial stage in an improvement process, and the potential adverse impact of a change of approach.

‘How we will continue to self-assess our progress and our partnership with a relentless focus on impact and improvement’

- 1.10 A key feature of our approach to safeguarding improvement has been to maintain a highly critical self-assessment dialogue within the partnership throughout the last 12 months. We have increasingly well-developed arrangements for this with an evidence base drawing from a mix of performance data, internal quality assurance (including systematic case file auditing), direct observation of staff practice, improved supervision and appraisal arrangements, the annual social care healthcheck, customer, practitioner and Safeguarding Board feedback and the outcomes and recommendations from inspections.
- 1.11 We are continuing to develop our rapidly improving performance and quality assurance framework, led by a highly regarded specialist colleague who is transferring learning and skills across the organisation and partnership. The improvement notice has instilled within and across Walsall an intensive and forensic focus on performance, building on some difficult and challenging experiences for the partnership. We are determined to ensure that the legacy of this approach, and the organisational experience behind it, continues to inform our approach to improvement.

Our Progress & Achievements at 12 Months

Our Strategic Improvement Plan provides a clear framework for clearly identifying and progressing the improvement priorities. Since the serving of the Improvement Notice we have applied a consistent model for driving forward performance around the three improvement themes. Previous progress reporting to DfE has been configured on this basis.

The December 2013 Improvement Plan update, and further supporting information for the DfE 12 month review provides evidence that we are continuing to secure improvement and impact across Children's Services and the wider partnership:

Our Partnerships & Governance

- Clear progress in developing and starting to embed a strategic approach to driving service improvement and transformation which links the safeguarding improvement activity to action across the full spectrum of Children's Services and the wider partnership.
- A stronger culture of challenge and accountability between partners, evidenced through both strategic and operational dialogue between Children's Services and critical partners including the Police, Health and Schools.
- Active and effective Children's Partnership, Safeguarding Board, Corporate Parenting Group, Scrutiny and Performance Panel and the emerging and Health and Well-Being Board. The Lead Member and other elected members have continued to provide increasingly effective and high-profile support, scrutiny and challenge to the improvement process, including through active involvement of members in developing their own challenge and quality assurance arrangements.

Our Capacity, Capability & Culture

- We are stabilising the Social Care workforce and reducing reliance on agency staff. Social Worker recruitment campaigns have received a positive response. Our planned approach to filling vacant posts has released short-term additional resources to enable experienced agency staff to work alongside newly qualified incoming staff to secure a smooth transition to a more stable operational workforce.
- Action to secure a safe and effective succession to new leadership arrangements is well underway with a phased approach to the appointment of a new senior leadership team in

early 2014. This is being led by Members and the Chief Executive with a firm emphasis on maintaining consistency of our approach to improvement as the organization moves through leadership changes.

- A relentless focus on impact, supported by improved quality and reliability of our information. It is a particular strength of our approach that we have developed a challenging, forensic and ongoing self-assessment process, informed by rapidly improving data and quality assurance processes. We understand the challenges that we still face, and we have plans in place which are dynamic, responsive and which change to reflect our ongoing learning.

Quality & Effectiveness of Our Frontline Practice

- Embedding our new multi-agency 'Front Door' services. Since implementation in April 2013 we have progressively improved the functioning and impact of this critical service area. This is being achieved through a combination of staff development, improved data and supporting systems, a more active buy-in from partners and a culture at all levels of leadership that is relentlessly focused on getting a better deal for vulnerable children and young people.
- Impact of our Early Help framework and Lead Professional arrangements. The DCS has directly led face to face discussions with staff at all levels of the organisation to ensure that learning from the early implementation of the new arrangements is swiftly translated into action and improvements to practice. We are increasingly focused on securing and evidencing early impact from the new arrangements.
- Significant improvements in the quality and timeliness of initial assessments. An initial backlog in the completion of initial assessments has been tackled effectively. This reflects the way in which we are increasingly well-positioned to use robust and targeted performance data to tackle blockages effectively, and as a platform to move swiftly and sustainably to a single assessment framework.

Next Steps – Moving to ‘Good’

Our Assurance Arrangements

We have previously set out for DfE in a letter of assurance our arrangements for securing the focus and sustained momentum of improvements to safeguarding and child protection services in Walsall, in anticipation of a lifting of the Improvement Notice. Our increasing confidence that we have a strong platform for sustained improvement has led us adapt this as a framework for the transformation of the wider spectrum of children and young people's services across the partnership.

In summary, the key features of our assurance arrangements are:

- Significant improvements to our robust, timely and targeted performance data and its use to inform both strategic and operational decision-making. Crucially, this is supported by a performance-aware culture and the systems in place to adapt and apply the data to the best possible effect across the full range of Children & Young People's Services. In addition to 'real-time' performance management, our self-assessment is increasingly well-developed, both internally and with the support of regional peer challenge and sustained independent challenge.
- A high level of active buy-in from across our partnership and from our political and senior officer structures. This reflects the significant investment of time and resources in Walsall in creating the right conditions for sustainable change within the organisation and wider partnership, in parallel with a direct approach to tackling frontline practice and making the changes to delivery that will make a tangible difference to outcomes for children and young people.
- Our increasingly responsive strategic partnerships have clear priorities which reflect the Strategic Improvement Plan and are overseen by a robust governance framework. The new Ofsted single inspection framework is providing a helpful focus for the partnership to engage with a much broader range of whole-system improvements to services with an acute focus on the child and young person's journey through our services. There is a clear and well-communicated understanding that we have high aspirations for our children, and that providing the right services to the right children, as early as possible is the best way to maximise their outcomes.
- A high profile and visible leadership and management structure continues to directly engage staff across the partnership. This approach will continue to be central to the way we lead and transform all of our services. The appointment of the incoming senior leadership team will be managed on a phased basis, overseen by members and the Chief Executive, with a focus on maintaining the key conditions for success that have characterised the leadership approach throughout the period of the Improvement Notice. This will provide strong leadership and stability during the transition from the Improvement Board to our local governance arrangements.

Our Next Steps to Secure 'Good' Services

Key priorities for the next phase include ...

Our Partnerships & Governance – Next Steps

- *Implementing whole-system improvements & reshaping Children's Services.* Building on our learning from the improvements we have secured in safeguarding and child protection services, our priorities for the next phase include transforming our Commissioning and Workforce Development functions, wholly integrating School Improvement and Education services and embedding our Early Help offer.
- *WSCB readiness for leading the safeguarding improvement priorities.* Our Safeguarding Board is now well-positioned to take on the accountability and oversight of the key improvement priorities – the Board is geared-up for this challenge, with strong support from political and senior officer structures within the Council, and from the wider Children and Young People's Partnership. Taking on this key responsibility will enable the Safeguarding Board to reach its full potential as a strategic force for change in Walsall.
- *Evidencing impact of the Children and Young People's Plan, Safeguarding Board, Corporate Parenting Group and internal governance arrangements.* Having built the partnerships, and the structures that will ensure they deliver, we are challenged with evidencing that this is making a real difference to outcomes for children and young people in Walsall. Our quality assurance and performance management arrangements are acutely focused on supporting and challenging our governance and oversight bodies to demonstrate impact. The strategic plans now being delivered have a clear focus on ensuring the measurability of progress and impact.

Our Capacity, Capability & Culture – Next Steps

- *Full implementation of Workforce Development Strategy & increased workforce stability.* We have taken decisive and effective action to tackle the central issue of workforce stability, reliance on agency staff and wider staff development. But the full implementation of our Workforce Strategy will require a determined and sustained programme of implementation. This is at the core of our plans for securing our hard-won achievements

to date, and creating a sustainable and good quality organisation in the longer-term.

- *New leadership arrangements in place to support our critical next phase of improvement.* Members and the Chief Executive are leading the oversight of a phased approach to making key permanent appointments to leadership and management roles which are critical to sustaining the pace of change and improvement across the full range of Children's Services functions.
- *Progressive improvements to how we use data to inform change and ensure impact.* Building on significant improvements in this area, we have prioritised improvements to the functioning and effectiveness of the current PARIS ICS system. This is in relation both to the availability, quality and integrity of data, and to the functionality and ease of use of the system for supporting and informing good social work practice.

Quality & Effectiveness of Our Frontline Practice – Next Steps

- *Evidencing effective implementation of a wholly integrated 'Front Door' service.* There is good evidence of early impact from the new MAST arrangements as we continually refine the new service model – with the active involvement of the DCS. It is a key priority for us to continue to work with 'real-time' performance information to review and refine this critical entry point to provision and to ensure that the most effective support is provided to the right children, in the right time and in the right place.
- *Embed the Early Help offer with a clear evidence base for measuring impact.* The first phase of our Early Help strategy has focused on putting the key building blocks in place: ensuring that staff, teams and service delivery arrangements are deployed and configured most effectively. We are now challenged with evidencing impact and with taking swift action to learn from our evidence base and refine our service model to deliver the best possible outcomes for local children and young people. This includes service throughput, distances travelled by children, and the extent of positive outcomes achieved, including 'step-down'.
- *Progressively strengthen the voice of children and young people across Children's Services.* Creating a stronger voice for children and young people with tangible evidence of impact on how we shape our services, has been a core principle of the improvement process. However, we believe that despite some improvements, 'voice' is under-developed and remains a headlining priority for the next phase of development –

supported by the new strategy for active involvement which has been signed-off by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board. This organisational learning will also build from Serious Case Review findings, ongoing learning from complaints, and the degree and quantity of children's participation in their progress review and planning.

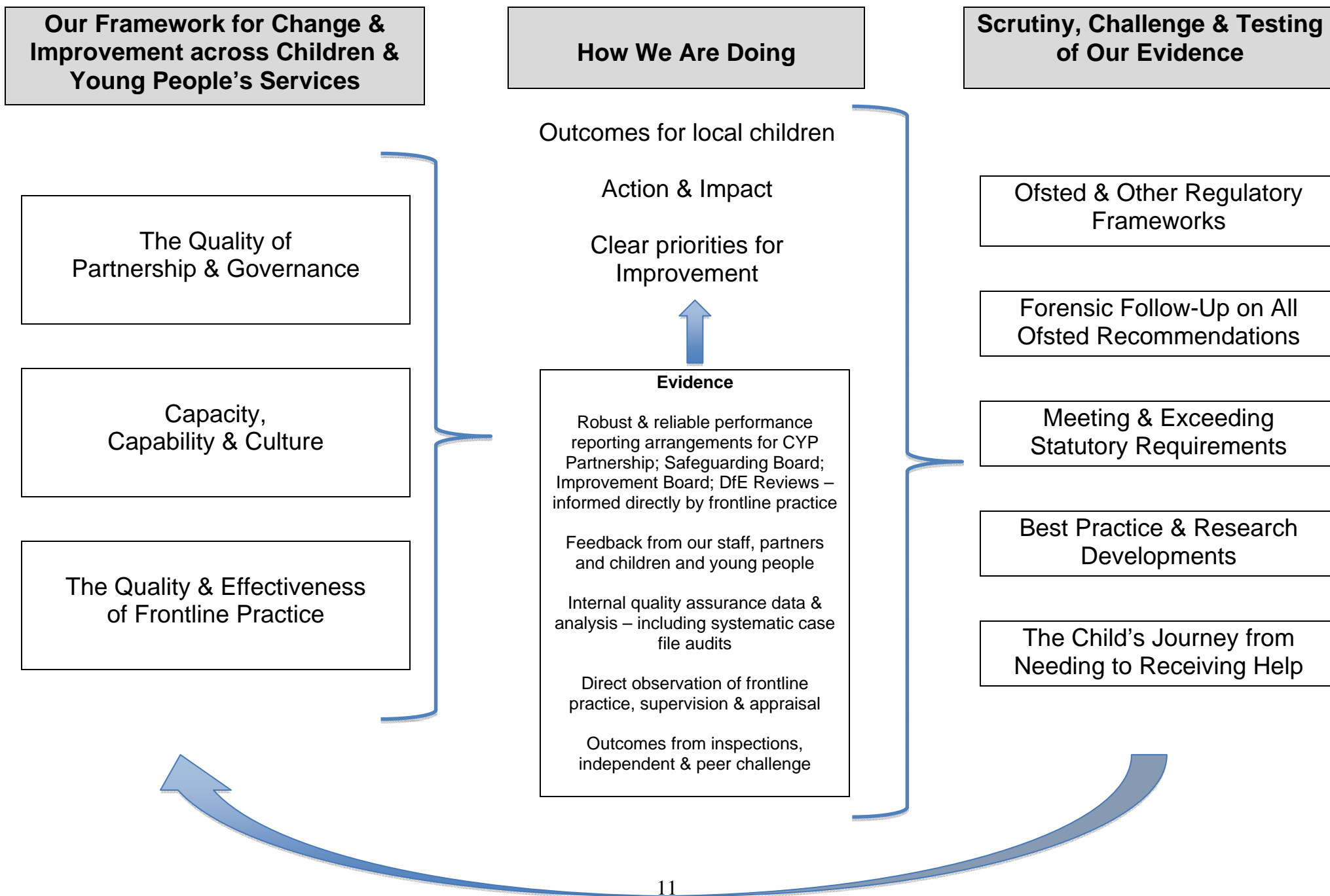
Better Together – One Year On

We are confident at 12 months that we can evidence significant and sustainable improvements as a firm platform for moving forward with a lifting of the Improvement Notice. All of our achievements and future plans are driven by an absolute determination to secure the best possible outcomes and life chances for children, young people and their families in Walsall.

- **Proving** – The rapidly improving quality of our data continues to inform a culture of rigorous self-assessment – sharply focused on the new Ofsted inspection framework. This is key to sustaining the momentum of improvement and transformation. Good information, sharpened by critical internal and independent challenge, is at the core of our assurance arrangements and provides a strong platform for the lifting of the Improvement Notice.
- **Improving** – We can evidence significant improvements in our support for children and young people over the last 12 months, and are clear about where we still need to improve. We are growing our learning from the improvement process and applying this to our action to transform the full spectrum of Children & Young People's Services.
- **Learning** – We have instilled a culture of learning and improvement across all levels of the organisation. There is clear ownership and commitment to this approach from elected members and the Chief Executive who are leading a phased programme of recruitment to critical new senior leadership roles. This will ensure that the hard-won improvements to the culture of Children's Services are sustained and built-on as the organisation and wider partnership continues to develop.

Councillor Mike Bird, Leader of Walsall Council
Paul Sheehan, Chief Executive
Rose Collinson, Interim Director of Children's Services

Self-Assessment in Walsall





‘Better Together For Children’

**Moving Towards Good
Safeguarding
& Child Protection Services in
Walsall**

**Supporting Information on Key
Performance Priorities**

**Report to DfE
3rd December 2013**



Walsall Council

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared specifically for the DfE 12 Month Review to complement the overview report and presentation and to provide more specific information on action and improvement against key themes highlighted in dialogue with DfE colleagues. These include some areas which were also in scope of recommendations arising from the recent Ofsted inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children. The areas covered in this report have been expanded to include an update on progress against the Ofsted 2013 recommendations.
- 1.2 Wherever possible throughout this report we have made direct reference to performance data and other sources of evidence to support our account of achievements or emerging trends. Our ability to present data with confidence in support of this report is a direct reflection of the significant improvements in the quality and reliability of our data in the 12 months since the serving of the Improvement Notice.
- 1.3 However, the development of our information base is a continuing priority and there remains much to be achieved to secure comprehensively robust data across the full range of Children's Services provision. Within this context we have applied a highly measured approach to the presentation of supporting data in this report. Evidence is only cited where there is firm collective agreement about the baseline, reliability of data sources and analysis. This reflects our approach to self-assessment, which has been increasingly challenging and robust.
- 1.4 A key characteristic of the improvement process in Walsall has been our absolute determination to challenge ourselves and other stakeholders in order to secure a better deal for children, young people and their families in Walsall. Our hope and ambition for children drives our work and in particular our persistent focus on getting and using better information to inform decision-making and to measure impact and outcomes for local people.

Councillor Mike Bird, Leader of Walsall Council
Paul Sheehan, Chief Executive
Rose Collinson, Interim Director of Children's Services

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9	Step-Up, Step-Down & Lead Professional Arrangements	✓	✓
10	Workforce Development	✓	✓
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13	Walsall Safeguarding Children Board	✓	
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CIN	Child In Need
CP	Child Protection
CPG	Corporate Parenting Group
CWD	Children With Disabilities
CYPB	Children & Young People's Board
DCS	Executive Director of Children's Services
EH	Early Help
H&WB	Health & Well-Being Board
IA	Initial Assessment
IB	Improvement Board
ICS	Integrated Children's System
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
IRS	Initial Response Service
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LAC	Looked After Children
MAST	Multi-Agency Screening Team
NFA	No Further Action (by Children's Social Care)
QA	Quality Assurance
QA&P	Quality Assurance & Performance Sub-Committee (WSCB)
PARIS	Children's Social Care Information System Software
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SFS	Safeguarding & Family Support Service
WSCB	Walsall Safeguarding Children Board

THRESHOLDS

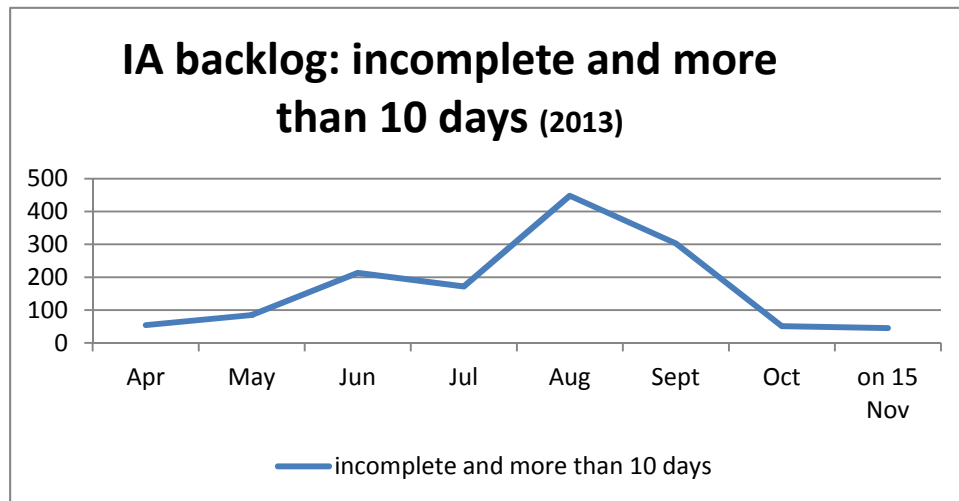
ACTION TAKEN

- We have completed a comprehensive review of policy and practice guidance for staff and partners on the application of thresholds to enable the most effective and timely support for children and young people. This was developed in consultation with staff at all levels of the organisation and with formal sign-off from the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board.
- We have embedded systematic peer auditing of case files across safeguarding services that includes analysis of decision-making and action on thresholds. Learning from this process is increasingly influencing policy, practice and service development. For example, this approach has helped to re-define the thresholds guidance. Feedback on the outcomes of the casefile audits is given to staff teams on a monthly basis to inform improvements in compliance and quality of practice. These include over the last 15 months (up to October 2013) 312 peer and internal audits; 40 external challenge audits; a systematic audited review of 195 Children with Disability cases and further ongoing independent thematic audits. Summary reports of learning and actions have commenced and key messages are being reported to governance bodies. A key next step is to ensure that this learning is translated into action and impact swiftly.
- The introduction of MAST and the link to the emerging Early Help Offer (referenced separately in this report) is actively supported by direct and ongoing engagement and face to face dialogue between the DCS and operational staff to ensure that service planning and implementation is clearly informed by frontline practice.
- We undertook a 'deep dive' audit of cases where Initial Assessment resulted in NFA for children's social care. This identified some weaknesses in the joint working arrangements between MAST, Social Care and the Early Help Offer. The findings directly informed a swift management response which has resulted in material improvements in the quality and consistency of decision-making.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- The deep dive audit and subsequent staff engagement sessions have resulted in swift communication around the need to ensure the right decisions are made as early on in children's journeys as possible. A renewed vigour in utilising early help, the firming up of the Early Help Strategy and Pathway, re-directing 120 cases from SFS to Early Help and consultation on the thresholds guidance followed as a direct result.

- There is increasing evidence to illustrate positive movement and a stronger collective understanding of our thresholds. Evidence includes a reduction in the backlog of initial assessments from 448 in August 2013 to 22 (on 22 November 2013), increasingly consistent decision-making and less adverse impact in the system. The thresholds were clearly too low, but we now have a fluid, responsive and functional framework in place that quickly identifies and actions system improvements. When changes are made they are swiftly and widely communicated to ensure prompt implementation.



WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Further improvements to the range and clarity of data captured by the electronic management system.
- Forensic monitoring of the application of thresholds through QA and performance management approaches, including the implementation of detailed step-up / step down monitoring – the numbers, duration and closure reasons / outcomes at each stage of the journey.

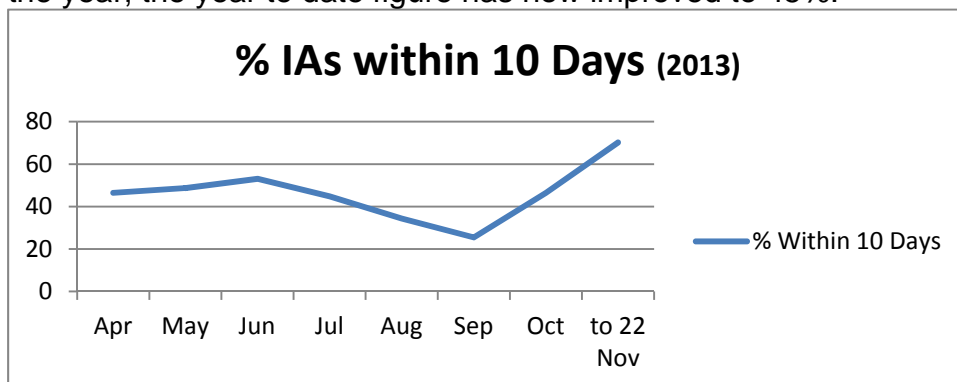
Multi-Agency Screening Team (MAST) & Initial Response Service (IRS)

ACTION TAKEN

- Following the April 2013 launch of the new MAST arrangements we have placed a continuing priority on analysing and refining the effective operation of the new model.
- A direct dialogue between DCS, Leadership Team and operational staff ensures that frontline experience quickly informs service delivery and design.
- Forensic case file auditing of MAST referrals has provided a strong evidence base to inform practice, improve communication and the development of critical linkage between front door provision and the Early Help Offer.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- The timeliness of initial assessment completion has improved considerably since the re-organisation of the duty rota. So far in November, 72.8% of initial assessments have been completed within 10 working days which suggests Walsall is in-line with the national average for March 2013. Whilst still low due to significant dip earlier in the year, the year to date figure has now improved to 45%.



- There has been good progress made on this priority. A good level of understanding exists amongst staff and partners of the new MAST arrangements and how to make contact. Anecdotal and audit evidence supports this through an ongoing DCS-led programme of operational staff engagement, and dialogue with partners at the Safeguarding Board, Improvement Board and with schools.
- IRS caseloads are reducing significantly as the backlog of initial assessments is reduced. This reflects increasingly consistent decision-making at point of contact and signposting to the Early Help Offer. Since September 2013 approximately 22% of contacts to MAST have resulted in a recommendation for an early help assessment, 36% for an initial assessment and 35% requiring no further action (NFA) by

children's social care. NFA also includes onward referral to a single agency and/or information and advice.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Direct work with staff across the full spectrum of safeguarding and early help provision to further develop practice and embed the cultural change and new working practices which will secure the best possible impact for children and young people from the Early Help Offer.
- Further potential for systematic recording improvements on PARIS (our ICS system) has emerged and these improvements are being addressed to ensure the quality of tracking this data going forwards.

STEP-UP / STEP-DOWN & LEAD PROFESSIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Links to Ofsted 2013 Recommendation

‘Ensure that, where children are ready to step down from a child in need plan, a lead professional is identified that can effectively coordinate early help services that continue to support improved outcomes’

ACTION TAKEN

- Our Early Help Pathway is in place with guidance on how the Early Help Assessment process is delivered. This sets out clear expectations of timeliness and multi-agency practice that links the Early Help Offer and statutory Child Protection Services. This is supported by the Thresholds Guidance and Step-Up / Step-Down practice guidance.
- Lead Professional arrangements are increasingly effective – there is a robust system in place for Early Help Assessments and interventions to be delivered in a timely way, resulting in direct work being undertaken with families. An identified senior operational manager takes responsibility for authorising the next steps. This provides a professional oversight of Early Help referrals.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- It is known that the figures currently being reported via the PARIS system significantly under-represent the number of children receiving early help assessments and support. Work is underway to rectify this.
- Manually recorded figures by MAST provide a better picture of the number of contacts forwarded to early help from this source – an average of 55 per week or 22% of the support request contacts received. This equated to 260 cases which have been redirected to an Early Help assessment since October 2013. Further work is underway with staff to increase this proportion.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Early Help briefing sessions are being delivered on a localised multi agency basis to provide an opportunity for frontline staff from across the partnership to discuss and agree how Lead Professional roles will operate at a local level.
- Action to improve & embed the pace of response to Early Help referrals includes: (a) Continuation of monthly peer audit of cases to evidence improvements in capturing the child's journey and (b) Changes to the recording system to track volume, outcomes and step up and step down at each stage of the child's journey

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

LINK TO 2013 OFSTED RECOMMENDATION

‘Ensure a review of the workforce planning strategy and take action to improve stability in the social workforce and reduce dependency on agency staff’

ACTION TAKEN

- The Workforce Development Strategy has been comprehensively revised with a sharper focus on measurable targets and outcomes reflecting the improvement priorities.
- We have implemented a staff supervision and appraisal framework which is monitored through robust performance monitoring arrangements with direct oversight from the Improvement Board. We have introduced the Professional Capabilities Framework and a wider programme of work to ensure we deliver on the Employer Standards for Social Work. This was carried out in 2012 and is currently being undertaken for 2013. The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services is the regional DCS lead on workforce development.
- A workload management tool is in place – initially in SFS, LAC and CWD to support and inform the effective operational management of social work caseloads and wider strategic decision-making on resources and the shape of local services. The tool is under continuing review to ensure effectiveness in the context of evidence of an overall reduction in caseloads from 25.2 (open CIN cases per worker, March 2013) to 20.7 in October. A strategic exercise has been undertaken in conjunction with HR, Finance & Workforce Development to ascertain exactly how many Social Workers are needed across Children's Services – informed by a balance between caseload averages and need.
- Our recruitment campaigns for social workers are consistently resulting in high numbers of applications and appointments to vacant posts. We are submitting an invest to save proposal to release resources from reserves to fund additional capacity for the induction and development of incoming newly qualified Social Workers, and to ensure a smooth transition to new staffing arrangements which will release agency staff from their roles.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- There are significant improvements in the recruitment of social work posts and a reduction in staff turnover. Taking the last 3 months in isolation this is 4.8%. The rolling 12 months figure is 16.6% to the end of October.
- Use of agency staffing has reduced from 65.6% to 53.9% (full-time equivalent) over the August to September period. It is anticipated that progressive implementation of the refreshed workforce development strategy will continue to address this against a background of the improving stability in the workforce.
- Vacancy rates are at 22% (36 vacancies). If the 13 posts under conditional offer were included, this rate would be 14.4%.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Continued implementation of the priorities set out in the Workforce Development Strategy.
- Actively support newly qualified social workers (who form the main part of the recent intake) to acquire skills and knowledge that will enable them to take on the more complex cases. This will facilitate the release of more experienced agency staff.
- Support & direction to operational managers on interpretation and application of workload management tool.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

LINK TO 2013 OFSTED RECOMMENDATION

Ensure suitable succession arrangements are in place at senior management level to ensure that current improvements in service delivery and outcomes for children and young people can be sustained

ACTION TAKEN

- Assistant Director posts for the new organisational model are scheduled for interview in early December following positive response to national advert. We are on target for initial appointments in early 2014. The new service model has been developed in parallel with the timelines and consultation arrangements for the whole Council budget-setting process for 2014/15.
- There is strong political and Chief Officer level support for securing a smooth transition to the new arrangements that maintains the focus and direction of the current Strategic Improvement Plan for Safeguarding.
- A continuing programme of DCS led staff engagement across all levels of the organisation contributes to a progressive improvement in communication, culture and motivation across all levels of Children's Services. We have prioritised staff training, development, supervision and appraisal programmes to develop and sustain workforce stability.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Reference turnover, recruitment and vacancy data in *Workforce Development* section above

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Completion of appointment process and phased handover arrangements agreed from early 2014.
- Reshaping services to sustain delivery and outcomes through a process of organisational change and new appointments to key posts.

WALSALL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

ACTION TAKEN

- The establishment of the WSCB and agreement on the Business Plan enables effective prioritisation of relevant service improvements for children and young people.
- The committee structure is now fully operational.
- Development and implementation of the Learning & Improvement Plan is being closely aligned with the wider Quality Assurance framework for children & young people's services to maximise resource capacity and impact.
- An independently facilitated WSCB review meeting was undertaken in October to review WSCB effectiveness & readiness for the single inspection framework and pick-up from IB. A report was presented to the November Improvement Board on the outcomes from this session.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Increased culture of challenge and accountability amongst partners – evident in the WSCB review
- Attendance & engagement from across partnership is good with 68% overall attendance at WSCB meetings this financial year, 73% at Quality and Performance Committee, 49% at Policy, Procedure Learning and Development Committee and 71% at SCR Committee. Low representation of probation colleagues in committee meetings has been addressed and agreement on attendance reached.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Produce evidence of the strategic influence of WSCB and impact on making a positive difference to outcomes for children and young people in Walsall. Central to evidencing impact will be early analysis of progress in delivering the priorities set out in the WSCB Business Plan.
- WSCB to lead responsibility for oversight and accountability arrangements for the continuing delivery of the Strategic Improvement Plan for Safeguarding following the lifting of the DfE Improvement Notice. In the short term, the Chair of IB is attending WSCB and a number of key former IB agenda papers will be considered first by WSCB and their recommendations communicated to IB. These measures will support the smooth transfer of accountabilities.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTNERSHIP

ACTION TAKEN

- Following full launch of the performance management framework for safeguarding in September 2013 and alignment to the WSCB, Corporate Parenting Group and Scrutiny and Performance Panel, the CYP Board has implemented a refreshed performance reporting arrangement. This will ensure robust strategic alignment between governance bodies to secure maximised impact of resources on prioritised areas of need.
- At the September meeting the CYP Board signed off the Terms of Reference and the Strategic Direction. Each of the CYPB Priority delivery plans is now complete and work is in progress to identify and use a partnership scorecard approach to drive progress and improve outcomes for children and young people.
- The Children and Young People's Plan and associated delivery plans have been reviewed and redrafted, strategic linkage with other relevant strategies ensured and critical challenge undertaken around the measurability of progress. This means that when the CYP Board receives quarterly performance reports and requests drill-down where necessary, the intelligence informing decisions is robust and action well-informed.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- There has been value demonstrated in the process of bringing partners together to champion and sponsor priorities. Each Sponsor led work across multi-agency teams to produce a delivery plan, detailing who will do what, over what timescale and with what outcomes.
- The partners were able to set aside organisational drivers to focus on the key needs of children and young people.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Move into the delivery phase of the Children & Young People's Plan – including measuring the impact of CYP Plan delivery, understanding the outcomes for children and young people, and continually refining our plans and our activity to reflect learning from early delivery of the CYP Plan priorities.
- Maintain and build on the established culture of accountability and professional challenge between CYP partners which has been forged through the development of the CYP delivery plans. This will be reflected in detailed joint working between meetings, as well as within the formal CYP Board process.

PARIS / ICS IMPROVEMENTS

Linked to Ofsted 2013 Recommendation

‘Ensure that the child’s electronic recording system facilitates and supports social work practice, quality assurance and performance management processes’

ACTION TAKEN

- We are taking priority action to identify and commission a new ICS system provider, whilst delivering a programme of comprehensive improvements to the current PARIS system. This will ensure longer-term systematic and sustainable change as a platform for improvement, whilst not compromising the need for swift and immediate improvements to the functionality and effectiveness of the system to support good social work practice. The commissioning of a new system is informed by our understanding of the requirements of the new Ofsted inspection framework.
- A broader base of professionals are using PARIS – leading to a widening the scope of usage across Children’s Services (for example Fostering and Adoption Teams) in addition to increased direct inputting by partnership colleagues including Health professionals.
- Revised forms for inputting CP Plans, Child Protection Enquiries, Core Groups and Children’s Placement Plans have gone live on the system for a 3 month trial period. This reflects a clear, measured and consultative approach to implementing improvements to the system that are informed by practice.
- From October, we have introduced a mechanism for recording of the reason for the conclusion of early help interventions. This will directly inform and influence the way in which the Early Help Offer is refined to secure maximum benefit for children and young people.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Weekly client, worker and team level data confirms considerable improvement in data quality scores: e.g. average IRS team score has increased from 88.2% accurate completion to 98.2% between August and October 2013.
- Staff are actively using data to support targeted improvement areas, and their managers are maintaining a detailed view of individual and team performance – this intelligence has recently influenced decisions around whether to retain particular workers.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urgent action is underway to ensure our ICS system fully complies with CIN return specification 2013/14 and that the new additional inspection requirements of Annex A can be fulfilled• The current procurement of a new ICS system is a key priority and is a critical platform for moving forward and securing longer-term improvements to evidencing practice, measuring the impact of our work and swiftly and effectively targeting improvement activity. In parallel with this we will continue to prioritise improvements to the current PARIS system.

EARLY HELP OFFER

ACTION TAKEN

- The Early Help Strategy and Early Help Pathway process are in place with supporting staff training and briefings undertaken to support implementation. The Early Help multi-agency advisory group has been established to oversee the implementation of the strategy. A planned programme of communication and engagement with all key partners is in place and being delivered. Staff engagement sessions with the leadership group & DCS have focused on the Early Help Offer.
- Tracking mechanisms for Walsall's Troubled Families programme are in place supported by staff training. To date we have identified 413 eligible families and the lives of 92 families have been turned around since work with the families started in September 2012. This has been referenced as 'great work' by the Director General of the Troubled Families programme.
- Locality Early Help Teams (Area Family Support Teams) have been reshaped and strengthened to directly support the Early Help Offer with increasingly effective targeting of cases referred through the MAST service. This includes step-down from Child in Need cases. Refreshed Family Support Panel arrangements are in place to quality assure and monitor impact of Early Help assessments & interventions

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- First report on impact of Early Help assessments & MAST linkage will report end November 2013 – this is the earliest credible date for measuring impact.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Walsall's 18 Children's Centres are being reshaped to be an integral part of the locality-based Early Help Offer. This is against a background of increasingly strong inspection outcomes for our Children's Centres.
- Implementing and learning from the outcomes of our 'Distance Travelled Tool' (Outcomes Star) supported by staff training (200 staff trained by end December).
- Building on performance and quality assurance data to continually develop service quality and impact of the Early Help Offer, to match need with provision and communicate it well.

<p style="text-align: center;">OFSTED 2013 RECOMMENDATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ensure that social worker caseloads are manageable so that children receive good quality input and this is recorded promptly</p>

<p>ACTION TAKEN</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workload management tool is in place – initially in SFS, LAC and CWD service areas to support and inform the effective operational management of social work caseloads and wider strategic decision-making on resources and the shape of local services. The tool and its results are under continuing review to ensure effectiveness in the context of evidence of an overall reduction in caseloads. • A strategic exercise has been undertaken in conjunction with HR, Finance & Workforce Development to ascertain exactly how many Social Workers are needed across Children's Services – informed by caseload averages. • These developments are aligned with improvements to staff support, supervision and appraisal to enable staff to deliver the most effective and best quality professional practice to secure the best possible outcomes for local children and young people. |
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<p>EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES</p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is firm evidence of reduction in caseloads – decreased from 25.2 at the end of March 2013 to 22.9 at the end of September and 20.7 at the end of October. (Measured by no. open Child in Need, CPP and LAC cases divided by no. workers) • Following audit activity, approximately 120 child in need cases have been diverted to Early Help, and the threshold descriptions consulted upon and consolidated. |
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<p>WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO</p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support & direction to operational managers on interpretation and application of workload management tool. • Further work to develop the tool more effectively for CWD application. • Develop a tool suitable for IRS use. • Take action on the outcomes of the strategic review of workloads. |
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OFSTED 2013 RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that children and young people are actively encouraged to participate in child protection conferences in the most appropriate way, including the use of advocacy support

ACTION TAKEN

- The Children's Society has been invited to represent children's views when appropriate at CP conferences and will report on this on a quarterly basis moving forward.
- Conferences invites have been strengthened to reflect the need for advocacy at CP conferences. A systematic method has been devised for child protection conferences and LAC reviews to track and quantify: the engagement of children and young people, the use of advocacy, the timeliness of contributions of partners and the quality of progress. This system goes live from December 2013.
- Action in this area is further supported by the development and implementation of the strategy for children and young people's active involvement across the full range of Children's Services provision and by the core principle that children should be regularly seen and seen alone as a critical element of any social work intervention.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Systems are in place but limited data is available on impact at this stage.
- Evidence from CP conference minutes and from a quantifiable quality assurance system being operated by Independent Chairs around CYP attendance, engagement and advocacy use.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Continued implementation of this theme as a priority across the partnership
- A specialist IRO booklet to inform CYP attendance at conference is currently being piloted for CP conferences and reviews across a broad range of cases of children up to age 11.

OFSTED 2013 RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that social workers undertaking enquiries into child protection concerns regarding disabled children work closely with the social worker from the disability team so that the information is clearly recorded and coordinated resulting in well informed evidence and findings and that this work receives sufficient management oversight

ACTION TAKEN

- Management action has been taken to strengthen joint working between CWD & Safeguarding Teams. This includes the implementation of a protocol and practice guidance to inform joint working arrangements.
- A staff development programme is being delivered to CWD staff to enhance their skills for undertaking their own child protection casework. This will negate the need for two workers to be involved in cases of this type.
- A development on PARIS is being implemented to identify clearly the lead key worker for each child

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Communication and roles and responsibilities are now clearer as is the process for dispute resolution.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Case file audit in January 2014 to capture significant number of relevant cases to inform further development of the protocol & related practice.

OFSTED 2013 RECOMMENDATION

Ensure appropriate responses to complaints processes and demonstrate learning from complaints

ACTION TAKEN

- The new framework for managing complaints has been developed, including the protocol for embedding organisational learning from complaints. This is being piloted during November 2013.
- A weekly report is provided to Assistant Directors detailing the status of all open complaints and where / how these are being responded to. This enables a direct drill-down where required to secure progress and tackle delay.
- The approval process has been tightened to reduce delay and increase the direct accountability of operational staff for the content and timeliness of complaints responses. The authorisation now sits at Head of Service level, minimising unnecessary tiers of corporate approval. By freeing up the Complaints Team from the chasing and administrative activity, they are available to give guidance and advice to Children's Services staff in building the response to the service user.
- Regarding dissemination of learning from complaints and serious case reviews, senior practitioners are now able to share learning whenever this is beneficial.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Emerging trends from analysis of complaints are being identified and reported as appropriate to senior managers and the Corporate Parenting Group to inform service development and management action. Headline themes include:
 - **Delays.** A common issue in complaints related to the time taken to complete a particular action, including arranging for something to happen or sending a copy of information promised. In looking at the reasons for these delays, whilst they often related to capacity issues there is a clear lesson in terms of managing the expectation of service users, planning workloads to take account of leave and in staff asking for help early where they are going to struggle to meet timescales.
 - **Voice of the child.** A number of those complaints that came directly from a child or young person related to them feeling like they were not being listened to, or that their wishes were being ignored. Improvements taking place elsewhere within the improvement plan should impact on this but it is important to recognise that complaints of this nature are themselves another expression of the child's voice and the culture of complaint handling should reflect the importance of this.

- **Communication.** A number of complaints relate to the way the customer feels about the way they were spoken to. Whilst these types of complaints are often difficult to reach a judgement on, as they are based on perception and are often one person's word against another, they do provide an opportunity for social workers and teams to reflect on their communication skills, whilst recognising that having to deliver difficult messages may result in some unhappy service users.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Embed the new complaints handling process, with regular review and refinement informed by staff and service user feedback.
- Develop an increasing evidence base of learning from complaints, including analysis of trends and details of how practice and systems have been changed to reflect this.
- Collate evidence of impact, where staff performance and children's outcomes have improved through our learning from complaints.

OFSTED 2013 RECOMMENDATION

Ensure the new quality assurance and performance framework is embedded to enable effective monitoring of service delivery, such as early help and commissioning

ACTION TAKEN

- The Performance and Quality Assurance Framework has been agreed and is being implemented across Children's Services. Findings are being actively used to address areas for improvement. Our QA Framework identifies a range of sources of learning & evidence to inform service planning & review. There are increasingly well-developed and embedded peer audit processes across frontline social care teams.
- Progressive improvements have been made to the quality and availability of management information, and to the performance monitoring arrangements that draw from this data. Performance scorecards are in place across all key strategic fora (e.g. IB, WSCB, CYPB,CPG, Scrutiny).
- We have applied the Youth Of Walsall survey, co-designed with young people, to gather intelligence on CYP views across a broad range of client groups to directly inform commissioning and planning decisions.
- Our JSNA is being used to inform commissioning and planning, drawing on information and intelligence from across children's and health services.
- Changes to the PARIS system increasingly enable reporting on Early Help impact. Communication has been undertaken to encourage consistently complete recording using the appropriate options.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Significant improvement in areas such as completed IA timeliness has been supported by managers using worker level reports
- New tracking of incomplete IAs by named workers is proving useful
- We have met with parents to improve SEN Transport services and short break services. Parents were involved in the evaluation of quality of short break tenders and their scoring has helped us award contracts and has informed future purchasing choice.
- Staff retention is actively supported by data and management information on casework outcomes being fed directly back to staff.

- Feedback from staff is that motivation and retention are increased by affirmation of good practice using evidence and feedback based on management information and oversight.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Continue to support managers to embed audits across Children's Services and to use the information and learning from audits to develop practice.
- Embedding systematic QA information and evidence into commissioning and contracting arrangements.
- Support around the QA measures available to commissioners to build more explicit outcome measures into contracts and outsourced arrangements.

OFSTED 2013 RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that parents are able to see all agency reports to child protection conference in advance so they appreciate the full range of professional staff's views of risk and protective factors

ACTION TAKEN

- A quantifiable quality assurance system to be completed by conference chairs following each CP conference has been agreed. Systems are now in place and are being built on the PARIS system.
- System in place to evidence of feedback from parents / families indicating level of satisfaction with the quality of relationships with social workers and services received. Improvements in timeliness of family receipt of agency reports to be captured via the IRO QA system and reported to QA&P Committee of the Safeguarding Board.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Feedback from IROs suggests that Social Work reports are increasingly being made available to parents in good time before conferences. Reports from other agencies remain more variable.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Actively engage partner agencies in providing advance reports.
- Implement PARIS / ICS data capture for the quality assurance system above – on target for completion early December.

OFSTED 2013 RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that everyone in the community, including key professionals, is aware of the requirements about safeguarding to children who are privately fostered

ACTION TAKEN

- Training for staff and partners has been delivered as a priority.
- Children and young people who are identified as being in private fostering arrangements are fully considered at private fostering panel and issues arising from the panel are immediately followed up. Case file audits were undertaken in August 2013 and all follow-up action that was required has been progressed.
- New promotional materials have been produced, in consultation with children and young people, to promote awareness of private fostering across professional and stakeholder groups.
- Staff have taken part in local radio programmes to raise awareness among ethnic minority communities of private fostering.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Systematic audits of visit records show there is good partnership awareness of private fostering arrangements and how the safeguarding, health and wellbeing needs of these children have to be met.

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

- Continue to actively raise awareness of partners to support the identification of children in private fostering arrangements.



Walsall Safeguarding Children Board

Report for DfE Meeting with Walsall Council – 12 Month Review, 3rd December, 2013

The Preparedness of the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board to Take Forward the Improvement Work

Introduction.

- 1.1 I was appointed as the Independent Chair of the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) in December 2012.
- 1.2 From my first meeting with members of the Board, both collectively and individually, it was clear that the recommendations made in the 2012 Ofsted Report on safeguarding practice in Walsall of the Board's functioning were fully accepted by all.
- 1.3 Over the last year the governance and practice of the Board has been subject to fundamental review – that review being based upon the Ofsted findings and on the accountabilities for safeguarding boards set out in the single inspection framework. We have made significant changes and the Board is now ready and able to take forward the improvement work in Walsall.
- 1.4 To assist the DfE at this 12 month review, and for consistency with the current approach, I will briefly apply each of the three main themes in Walsall's "Strategic Improvement Plan for Safeguarding Children" to the WSCB to demonstrate the Board's readiness to take forward this crucial agenda.

The Quality of Partnerships and Governance

- 2.1 The WSCB has full "buy in" from its constituent member agencies, and young people from the Safeguarding Inspectors Team. The Board has recently decided to increase the frequency of meetings from two-monthly to monthly to secure the momentum and focus required to enable us to fully address the continuous improvement agenda.

2.2 We have established five Committees for the Board:

- Policy, Procedures, Learning and Development
- Quality Assurance and Performance
- Serious Case Review
- Child Death Overview Panel (Jointly with Wolverhampton)
- Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children.

2.3 The Board works to a published Business Plan (which will be extended/revised as necessary to include key elements of the Strategic Improvement Plan). We have a Learning and Improvement Framework, underpinned by a balanced scorecard and aligned with quality assurance arrangements in constituent agencies. We also ensure that we have ways of picking up on lessons learned from Serious Case Reviews, peer reviews and complaints and compliments. Walsall has a Serious Case Review underway at present: we are taking steps to identify and learn from any emerging lessons ahead of completion and publication of the final report.

2.4 The Board has formal links to the Children and Young Peoples' Partnership, the wider Health and Well Being Board and the Council's Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel. As WSCB chair I personally champion one of the eight priorities in the recently published Children and Young People's Plan to 'reduce the harm caused by child exploitation including children missing from home.' I am also an active participant in a Police-led regional group on tackling child sexual exploitation.

Capacity, Capability and Culture

3.1 The WSCB will continue to offer a wide range of safeguarding training. We are currently exploring the possibility of working with Research in Practice to find ways of measuring the impact of that training on professional practice and outcomes for children and young people.

3.2 The Board itself now has the capacity and capability to drive forward the improvement journey. Our culture is one of "Better Together for Children in Walsall", of effective and fair challenge, holding each other to account without fear or favour and being open and honest throughout. At a recent special meeting of the Board to review our progress, the following emerged: *"there was a collective agreement to broaden the scope of challenge beyond Children's Social Care and for each agency representative to actively bring forward issues for consideration (on which to be held to account) from their agency. Also, challenge should not be restricted to formal Board and Committee meetings"*.

- 3.3 The WSCB, with its Committee structure, is now able to play its part in ensuring that there is effective prioritisation of service improvements for Walsall's children and young people across all constituent agencies, maximising resource capacity and impact.

The Quality and Effectiveness of Front Line Practice

- 4.1 The Board has resolved to implement, through the Quality Assurance and Performance Committee, a rolling programme of multi-agency case file auditing, using a common auditing tool, which spans the full range of WSCB partners.
- 4.2 Similarly, we will be ensuring that clear up-to-date policy and practice guidance for front line staff is in place, to inform and support decision-making on thresholds and inter-agency or team transfers. The fully revised policy is coming to the Safeguarding Board for formal approval in November.
- 4.3 Over the coming months we will be giving particular attention to the Early Help/Front Door offer, particularly on an inter-agency basis: we need to ensure that "preventative" measures are positively impacting on the need for statutory intervention.
- 4.4 We will be keeping the Children with Disabilities service under review and also undertaking an examination of Private Fostering in the Borough.

Other Issues Moving Forward

- 5.1 Together with colleagues on the Walsall Adult Safeguarding Board we are commissioning a full review of the inter-agency Domestic Violence work in the Borough. We are also mindful of the "Toxic Trio" of domestic violence, parental mental ill-health and substance abuse, having held a successful multi-agency conference on this issue earlier this year. There is likely to be significant work for the WSCB to oversee in the coming months, along with a strong focus on developing the Board's impact in tackling the Child Sexual Exploitation agenda in Walsall.

- 5.2 The West Midlands Police will shortly be announcing a reconfiguration of their Public Protection Units and their safeguarding work overall. There will inevitably be major implications for us: for example, we anticipate that the development of multi-agency assessment teams will be high on the shared agenda.
- 5.3 We are joining with colleagues in a number of other LSCBs within the West Midlands in undertaking a review of safeguarding issues in early years settings – this follows on from a significant adverse incident in Worcestershire. Any lessons to be learned will be applied in Walsall.
- 5.4 At a time of continuing pressure on public sector finance, the WSCB will need to ensure that all constituent agencies continue to make a fair financial contribution to the Board's operation. The November meeting of the Safeguarding Board is undertaking a priority discussion to secure partnership contributions for 2014/15.
- 5.5 A high priority for us currently is the completion of a comprehensive Serious Case Review and on ensuring that lessons from this case, and ongoing learning across the partnership, directly informs the strategic leadership, challenge and impact of the safeguarding board as we move forward.

Conclusion

It should be clearly apparent that, in my view, the WSCB is now well placed to “pick up the baton” from the Children's Improvement Board. This view is shared by members of the WSCB. Neither I nor they underestimate the challenges that we will face but we are united in our commitment to getting it right for Walsall's children and young people, now and in the future.

Robert Lake

Independent Chair WSCB

November, 2013

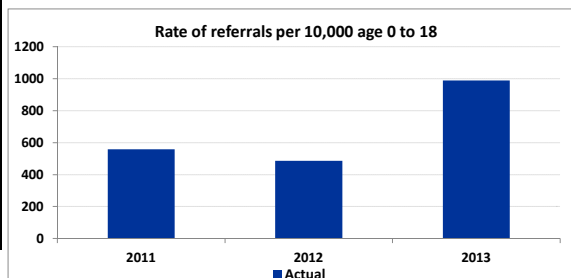
1.0 Early Help

Charts for Selected Areas

(There are known recording issues being addressed, so the below is likely to be a under-estimation)	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13
Early Help Rate per 10,000 CYP	169.2	210.5	267.5

2.0 Front Door

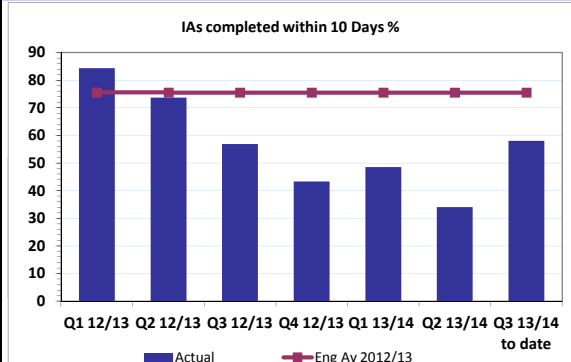
	Mar-13 Eng	Mar-13	Nov-13
Number of referrals received	593500	4454	4192
Referral rate per 10,000	520.7	703.4	988.7
% re-referrals in 12 months (SB)	24.9	13.8	14.8
CiN rate per 10,000 CYP (excluding LAC and CPP)	332.2	294.5	202.4



3.0 Assessments

Assessment Timeliness	Mar-13 Eng	Mar-13	Nov-13
% Initial Assessments (IA) completed < 10 days (BB)	75.5	64.9	46.0
% Core Assessments (CAs) completed < 35 days (BB)	76.7	64.7	82.6

In November 75.4% of initial assessments have been completed within 10 working days which suggests this back in-line with the national average for March 2013.



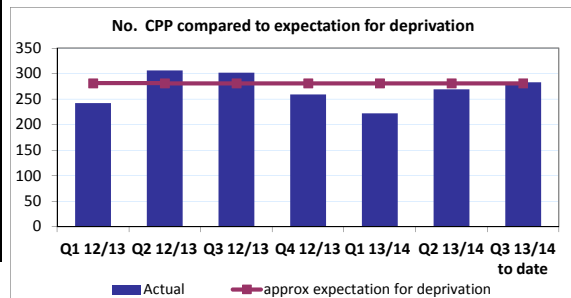
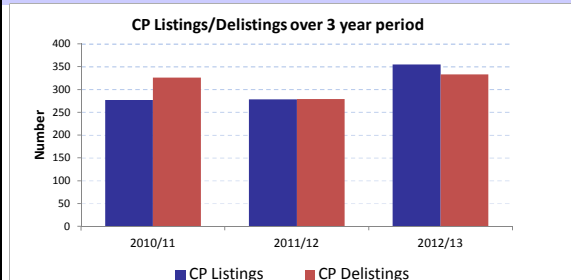
4.0 Children on a Child Protection Plan

Child Protection Plans	Mar-12	Mar-13	Nov-13
No. Child Protection Plans (CPP) at the end of year	230	251	283
No. de-listed during the year	248	334	232
No listed during the year	255	355	264

The number of CP listings for October has superseded the income deprivation expected level for March 2013 of 281, which the Walsall figure for March 2013 is shown to be below.

CPP Rate per 10,000 (England March 2013 = 37.9)	36.2	39.6	44.5
Repeat CPPs	Mar-13 Eng	Mar-12	Mar-13
Second or subsequent CPP in 2 yrs since a CPP (%)	14.9	10.5	10.4

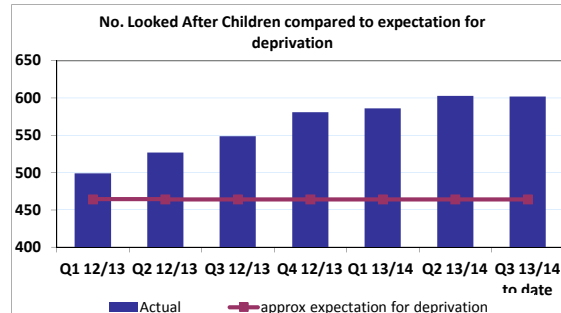
10-15% is considered as ideal. Walsall's rate has remained good, indicating appropriate caution levels.



Walsall Children's Scrutiny Board - Q3 scorecard (November)

5.0 Looked After Children/ Adoption

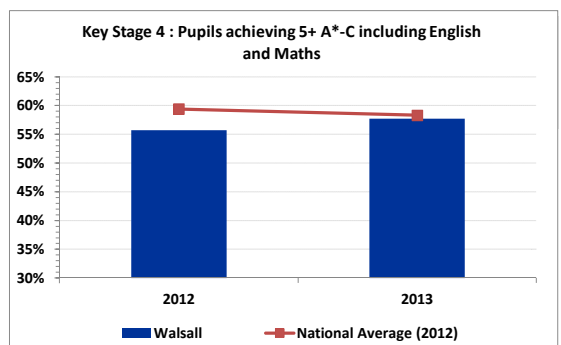
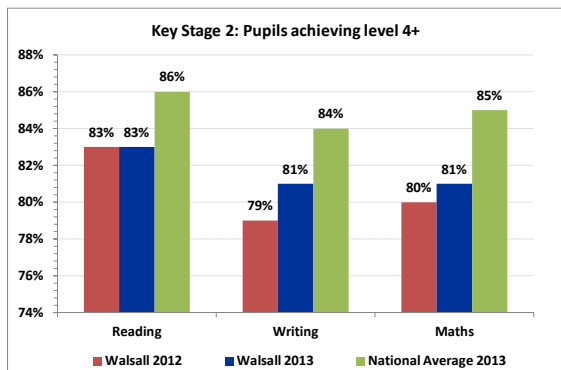
	Mar-13 Eng	Mar-13	YTD Nov-13
Numbers of Looked After Children	68110	574	602
LAC Rate per 10,000 CYP	60.0	90.6	94.7
⚠ Long Term Stability of LAC (% in care 2.5 years in same placement 2 years) (BB)	67%	65.7%	55.8%
✅ Average time from Entering Care to being adopted (Days) (SB)	647	1196	533



6.0 Education - attainment/attendance

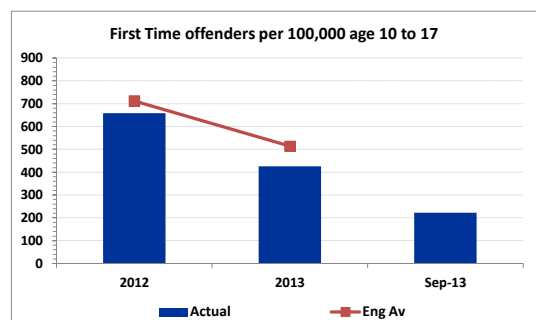
	2013 Eng	2012	2013
Early Years : Pupils Working at a Good Level Of Development	52%	51%	46%*
↔ Key Stage 2 (Level 4+) : Reading (BB)	86%	83%	83%
✅ Key Stage 2 (Level 4+) : Writing (BB)	84%	79%	81%
✅ Key Stage 2 (Level 4+) : Maths (BB)	85%	80%	81%
✅ Key Stage 4 : Pupils achieving 5+ A*-C including English and Maths (BB)	58.3%	55.7%	57.7%
✅ Key Stage 5 : Average Points per Candidate (BB)	709.1	641.9	697.5
⚠ Key Stage 5: Average Points per candidate: School Sixth Forms (BB)	775.5	767.3	766.6
⚠ Persistent Absence (All Schools) (SB)	4.9% (Terms 1 & 2)	4.8%^	5.7% (Terms 1 & 2)
✅ % of schools rated good or outstanding (BB)	70%	63%	68%
	2012 Eng	2011	2012
✅ % of pupils receiving fixed term exclusions (SB)	4.05% (304,370)	4.1% (1,910)	3.3% (1,540)
⚠ % of pupils receiving permanent exclusions (SB)	0.07% (5,170)	0.04% (20)	0.06% (30)

* the methodology for measuring this indicator changed in 2012/13 so not comparable with previous year



7.0 Youth Offending / Participation/ Positive Activities

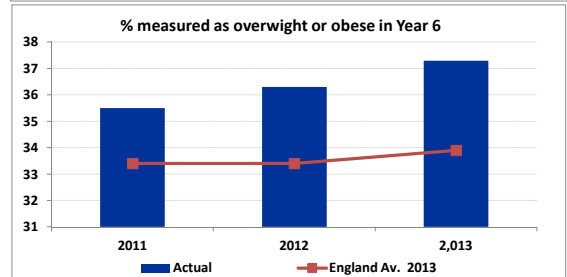
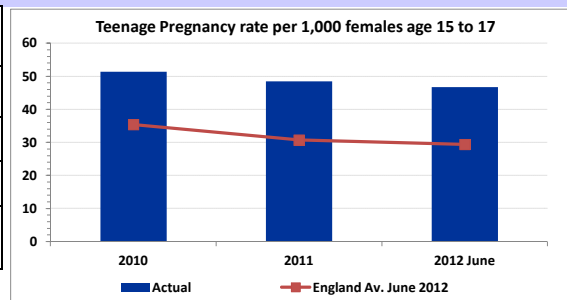
	2012	2013	Sep-13
✅ First Time offenders per 100,000 age 10 to 17	658	425	222
⚠ Re-offending rate	0.54	0.76	0.88
Numbers of Young People engaged in Positive activities (nb. generous counting rules)	14251	19310	tbc
✅ Rates of anti-social behaviour	2870	2344	1109
✅ 16 18-year-olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET)	7.4%	6.4%	n/a



Walsall Children's Scrutiny Board - Q3 scorecard (November)

8.0 Health Outcomes

	2010	2011	2012 June
↗ Teenage Pregnancy Rate * (SB)	51.4	48.5	46.7
	2011	2012	2013
↘ % measured as overweight or obese in Year 6 (SB)	35.5	36.3	37.3
* Data is reported 5 Quarters in arrears			



9.0 Staffing / Workforce

	Mar-13	Oct-13	Nov-13
↗ Vacancy Rate - the number of vacant social worker posts as a % of all SW posts (SB)	14.4	22.5	18.6
↗ Turnover Rate - the number of social workers leaving as a % of workforce establishment on 1st April (SB)	10.5	16.8	16
↗ Average number of days lost to Sickness Absence by social workers. (SB)	16.5	14.5	13.2
	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13
Number of Agency Staff - Headcount	83	73	67
↗ Numbers of Agency Staff - FTE (SB)	65.1	42.3*	tbc

*- 5 week month

10.0 Complaints received relating to CYP

Complaints	Mar-13	YTD Nov 13
Complaints Stage 1	116	154
Complaints Stage 2	8	5
Complaints Stage 3	0	0

15 safeguarding complaints

Legend

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

*'I tell my story once,
Support and services join up around me,
People do what they say,
I feel better and safer.'*

Plans are Promises

Keeping our word and doing what we've promised to do is really important to children....especially to those children and young people who've been let down before by adults in their lives. When we say we'll do something in a particular way, by a particular day, it's a promise we need to keep.

Our Children's Plan (CYPP) 2013 – 2016, is our partnership promise to children and young people in Walsall. It's our collective putting into practice being 'better together for children' around those 'stuck and stubborn' issues that will really change and improve life-chances for children.

The Children and Young People Board, the group of partners from all the agencies that children need to keep them safe and secure: police, health, education, housing and the voluntary and community sectors - has identified 8 improvement priorities, each championed by a Board Member, which we believe will make a real and sustainable difference to the lives of vulnerable children and their families. We've promised to work across our partnership to:

- support the most vulnerable families to give their children the best start in life
- help children stay a healthy weight
- protect children from sexual exploitation
- increase opportunities for young people's learning and employment options
- plan more effectively for children and young adults with disabilities
- use the views, contributions and achievements of children and young people to improve services
- talk, listen and work better together across professional boundaries
- work together to reduce the impact of child poverty

These aren't the only priorities for children in Walsall but we believe they are the 'wicked issues' that aren't any one single agency responsibility, but actually need concerted action from everyone.

They are our partnership promise to children. Watch out for your CYPP priorities card: a handy reminder of our Children Plan promises...and more importantly, challenge the Children's Partnership, on behalf of children, to 'do what we' say' and turn those partnership promises into practice.

Promises and plans come in a range of shapes and sizes – and each and every one is important in making a difference for children, in them believing that adults can be trusted, that we will do what we said we'd do. It can be as simple but vital as:

- the phone call back to a young person or another worker in his or her life – on time, when we said
- following up on a partner's contribution to a care plan in a timely way
- always seeing a child, whatever their age, alone – we're children's workers, first and foremost

- never saying 'they' when we mean 'we' – we're in it together
- never settling for second best for children – if it doesn't feel right, if it isn't good enough then we need to be honest with each other and speak up and speak out
- spotting a gap in support or services and highlighting what we need to do to fix it – never seethe silently, tell us!
- handing over a case - and every case is a child – with care, so that there's a smooth transition for him or her
- investing time in knowing, really knowing, what other partners do for children and what they can add to a child's need for care, help and protection

It genuinely does 'take a whole village to look after children', it does take us all to work together to keep hold of the baton for children, with collective ambition, trust and good information sharing between teams, services and agencies.

Messages from the Minister

A year ago, in response to our Improvement Notice, we promised to improve swiftly and sustainably around a long 'to do' list, set out under 3 themes:

quality and effectiveness of frontline practice where we promised to:

- improve the quality and consistency of initial and core assessments
- improve the quality, delivery and management of child protection plans
- develop and implement a whole systems framework to manage families' pathways from early help to statutory intervention
- develop and implement a system of risk assessment to inform decision making
- ensure robust QA systems
- use feedback from children, families and staff to inform and shape practice
- ensure robust management oversight and decision making

capacity, capability and culture where we promised to:

- implement a comprehensive programme of induction, training, mentoring and CPD for practitioners and partners across Children's services
- ensure social worker responsibilities and workloads are manageable and equitable
- ensure leadership, scrutiny and challenge is exercised and impacts on safeguarding and LAC services

improving the quality of partnership and governance where we promised to:

- strengthen the role and leadership of WSCB so that we:
 - have clear multi-agency thresholds
 - implement a borough wide multi-agency quality audit system
 - implement learning from SCRs and complaints
 - have prompt information sharing
 - support the Clinical Commissioning Group to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities

Together, we've tackled that list through our Improvement Plan: our promise to the Minister – and importantly our promise to Walsall children and those who work with them. We've done it with purpose, passion, humility and hope. Some things take a longer while to fix, others are simpler and swifter but the common theme across all of our work has been to work with the right children, at the right time, in the right way.

As with any 'to do list' as soon as one thing is ticked off, another few get added! Our focus remains on sustaining our:

- productive partnerships and relationships for children
- effective, evidence informed practice that makes a difference for children now...and going forward
- an open and connected culture where people feel supported and secure as well as professionally stretched and valued

As well as making sure we've got :

- secure, ongoing assurance arrangements which enable us to know ourselves well, spot and stop 'trouble ahead' and welcome scrutiny and challenge
- reliable, quality performance information that gives us a clear picture of the difference we are making for children...and highlights gaps and opportunities to be even better together for them
- a stable and strong workforce and partnership for children

This set of promises will be tested out next week when, a year on, from our Improvement Notice we have our 12 month review day, when colleagues from the DfE will be testing out by talking with practitioners and partners, looking at numbers and stats and listening to our own evaluation of impact and progress to see if we have kept our promise to children and young people. Wish us well!

Doing what we say has always been important for children, whether it's Laurie Lee in *'Cider with Rosie'* waiting for his 'present' all day on his first day at school and then going home disappointed, cross and upset and ...

'...in a smouldering temper.

'What's the matter, Lol? Didn't he like it at school, then?'

'They never gave me the present!'

'Present? What present?'

'They said they'd give me a present.'

'Well now, I'm sure they didn't.'

'They did! They said 'You're Laurie Lee, ain't you? Well just you sit there for the present. I sat there all day but I never got it. I ain't going back there again!'

Not getting a 'present' is one thing, but not getting the help, care and support you need when you need it, is quite another. I know my passion and purpose is matched by yours – and that means we will do the right things in the right way for sustainable improvements for children. Doing what we say, delivering on our promises so that, collectively, we give children in Walsall the most powerful thing we can – the ability to invent the future they want rather than have to accept the one they get.

Thank you for what you do and the promises you keep on a daily basis to make sure children in Walsall are safer, happier, healthier and have a better today, and a brighter tomorrow.

Better together for children...December 2013

Just before Christmas and year end, I wanted to keep you up to date about our improvement journey, share some of my personal highlights and wish you all the very best for the festive season.

A few weeks ago we had our DfE review meeting – an important opportunity to reflect on what, together, we've achieved as well as look forward to how we'll collectively tackle the 'more to do' list. Just before the round table meeting, DfE colleagues met with a group of social workers and a group of managers and I was really proud to hear the positive feedback they'd heard from front-line practitioners:

'Walsall's in a different place'

'people feel part of the journey'

'clearer about practice'

'Senior managers are listening'

And then there was a chance to present some highlights and evidence our practice over the last 4 months:

- more productive and purposeful partnerships where increasingly talk around a Board table really does turn into action for children and families, where challenge is accepted as a concern and need for change and where we do what we say we'll do ...rather than say it all again at the next meeting!
- a really positive response to recruitment and retention – it must be all those breakfasts Sue cooks! ..but seriously a big thank you to Errol Edwards, Liz White, Usma Kauser and Joel Desous for speaking at our November breakfast briefing about opportunities in Walsall and to Kirsty Naylor for not only coming to the social care engagement session but being a radio star too...and on her first day working for Walsall
- better data that is useful...and importantly used, used to help us be better together for children, whether that's understanding the patterns of initial assessments and early help assessments so we make sure that the right people are working with the right children at the right time, or making sure that case loads stay as equitable and manageable as possible so social workers can be the reflective practitioners they need to be to do direct work with children and families
- our Children and Young People Plan – great to see all the offers written on the table cloths in our 'World Cafe' and folk really up for how we can make the promises in our plan happen for real so children have a brighter today and a better future
- improving 'step-up and step down arrangements' supported by practical guidance for professionals making a much smoother journey from needing to receiving help for children
- and always making sure we check out with all of you so we hear about what's not working and why, as well as know and celebrate what's going well

as well as set out our 'to do' list:

- strengthen the voice of children and young people in everything we do
- develop and support our workforce – all of you – to be the very best children's workers possible

- maximise the impact and effectiveness of our Safeguarding Children's Board so it's ready to take on all that our Improvement Board currently does
- embed our early help offer and track its impact for children and families
- make sure our 'front door' always helps children get the right help, protection and care, at the right time, from the right people
- keep our partnerships productive – and focused on the difference we can make together - not 'talking heads' but active partners for children
- and reshaping Children's Services in a way that's secure and sustainable

The review meeting was rightly robust and challenging about the important things for children and young people: impact and outcomes, sustaining the momentum and about knowing ourselves, really knowing ourselves so we'll never slip back to a bumpy and bleak inadequate place. The focus groups, the discussions, and most importantly our practice and our partnerships will inform the advice that goes to the Minister ...and I hope he finds time over Christmas to, like me, celebrate all the positives for children in Walsall over the last year, our honesty about what and how we still need to improve, and our ambition and determination to be even 'better together for children'.

A few weeks ago a great world statesman died, Nelson Mandela, a man who famously said that '*in my country we go to prison first and then become President*'...but who also said '*There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children*'. And as children's workers – and we all are – that's powerful, compelling and a big responsibility. But I think it's one that, together, we are working hard to make sure that we deliver on so that children in Walsall are safe, happy, healthy, with a better today and an even brighter tomorrow.

Thank you for all you each do and in partnership to be 'even better together for children'.

I do wish you all the very best for a peaceful Christmas and a great New Year.