

# Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Agenda  
Item No 12.

5<sup>th</sup> September 2017

## Report on RISE agenda

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolios:** Cllr Aftab Nawaz – Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services

### Executive Summary:

**The report provides an overview the RISE agenda within Children's Services**

### Reason for scrutiny:

The report provides information about the background to the RISE agenda and progress against the work streams to date so that the Scrutiny Panel is fully aware of the work being undertaken. This information enables Scrutiny Panel to monitor, scrutinise and challenge progress.

### Recommendations:

**That:** Scrutiny notes the contents of the report and understands the progress to date and continued areas of improvement and actions to address them.

Scrutiny provides challenge on the content of the report and receive assurance about corrective action being taken to secure improvement.

### Background papers:

Strategic Improvement Plan  
Recruitment and Retention Strategy  
LAC Reduction Strategy  
LAC Reduction Plan

### Resource and legal considerations:

None arising directly from this report.

### Citizen impact:

The delivery of effective Children's Early Help and Social Care Services has a direct impact on the welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. Walsall is a Corporate Parent for some of our children and will undertake this role well. It links directly to the Corporate Priority to improve Health and Wellbeing and the Children's

services priority that all children and young people in Walsall are safe, happy and learning well. The delivery of effective social care and Early Help services ensures that children in Walsall are safeguarded and protected from harm.

**Environmental impact:**

None directly arising from this report.

**Performance management:**

Monitoring the effective delivery and impact of services to children young people and their families and the impact is essential so that the Council can be assured that the resources at its disposal are being used to maximum impact. The progress against the RISE agenda is monitored via the Children's Services monthly Performance and Improvement Board and in addition via the Transformation Board.

**Equality Implications:**

The Council's equality of opportunity policy and procedures are operated by the Council and Children's Services Directorate and an equality impact assessment has been completed.

**Consultation:**

Consultation has taken place with front line social workers, foster cares and young people as part of developing the LAC reduction plan.

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## Report

### 1. Background information

1.1 Children's services launched the 'RISE' agenda in Spring of 2016. This mnemonic has been consistently used since then to promote the key priorities for children's services over the past year both in terms of communicating with front line staff and bringing structure to service planning. It also supports the corporate priority of 'Reducing looked after children safely'. The corporate transformation programme is monitoring progress in relation to associated budget savings.

1.2 **R**educe looked after children safely

**I**mprove quality of practice

**S**killed and stable workforce

**E**arly Help early on

The RISE agenda is well understood by staff and will continue to drive all activity within Children's Services for the next 3 years. All the work streams are interdependent and have clear actions.

**2. Reduce LAC safely:** The key actions have and will continue to focus on the following activity.

2.1 Gaining a better understanding of the demand on our services and developing predictive analysis to understand current and future demand to support and inform future planning and demand management. This is still a work in progress and we have sought support from North Yorkshire as 'Partners in Practice' and exploring better resources to understand the range of information that is held to develop a mature understanding of needs and trends and how this relates to the regional and national picture and current and strategic planning.

2.2 Establishing effective tracking processes to reduce drift and delay and manage the demand for external residential placements.

A Looked After Children's Tracker has been in operation for the past year. This routinely reviews the progress of plans for all Looked After Children and Children subject to legal proceedings. There has been a focus on reducing the number of children placed at home on care orders and with those placed with family. To date 46 children have been discharged from care via adoption, Special Guardianship Orders and revocation of their care orders. There are further applications before the court and assessments in progress.

- 22 adoptions achieved against a target of 50 with a further 37 children placed for adoption.
- 15 children have secured permanence via special guardianship or child arrangement orders: against a target of 50.
- 9 children have returned to parental care and their care order have been revoked

External Placement Panel regularly reviews children placed in residential homes out of borough and there has been targeted action to consider alternative options to either return them back to internal residential provision in line with their care plans or step down to fostering or supported accommodation provision in line with their care plans. In 2016/17 12 children ceased to be care for in external residential placements and since April 2017 a further 8 children have moved to alternative placements in line with their care plans. This is against a target of 12 children by 2021.

2.3 Review Edge of care resource: A formal review has been completed and plans to progress the reconfiguration of resources are being drawn up as part of the Transformation work stream. We need to ensure that the service is multi-disciplinary; more effectively targeted and uses evidence based approaches.

2.4 Recruit more Walsall foster carers. There is a revised marketing strategy which is overseen by the Fostering Steering group and this includes the review of the financial remuneration to foster carers which is underway to further strengthened recruitment and retention. In addition, The Mocking Bird Model will be launched by February 2018 to strengthen placement support and stability. The target is to recruit 25 new households is on track.

2.5 A Case Progression Officer has been recruited to support the timely progression of care proceedings. This person is in post and supports the LAC tracker process and works closely with the Permanency co-ordinator so that early permanency planning is progressed and options for adoption and Special Guardianship are fully explored. A review of the current processes is planned to ensure that drift and delay is minimised. Timescales for progressing cases through court with 26 weeks is good.

**3. Improve the quality of practice:** The key actions have and will continue to focus on.

3.1 The Academy of Social Work and Early Help was launched in March 2017 and oversees a range of comprehensive learning and development opportunities. This includes restorative practice, which we are using to promote relationship based social work: Staff have engaged well with the training programmes and feedback is very positive. In addition, between April and July there was an intensive practice uplift with social workers and managers in Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding Family Support Services.

3.2 Embedding the 'Owning and Driving Performance' programme. The second wave of this cultural shift programme is underway and the impact is that there is evidence of more proactive discussions taking place with staff about poor performance and managers are developing and using a coaching style to promote better learning and understanding with front line staff.

3.3 Revised suite of performance reports: These have assisted managers to understand the activity within their units and service areas is has assisted with the focus on. The performance cycle has been strengthened and the monthly Performance Board receives updates from the group managers and provides robust challenge. There is still more work to be done with front line team managers to ensure that they all use the information effectively to challenge practice consistently and performance dashboards are being developed to make the information more accessible.

- 3.4 The audit process has been reviewed and team managers have all been trained. Monitoring the outcome of audit activity along with Performance data and feedback from children young people and their families provides the main information about the quality of practice. Whilst there is evidence that some areas of practice have improved. (children being seen regularly and their wishes and feelings being sought). There is still more work to be done to ensure a consistently good level of practice across the whole service.
- 3.5 Develop mobile technology for social workers. New mobile tablets are being rolled out to front line staff and this is facilitating more flexible working and supporting improved standards in case recording.
- 3.6 Introduction of the Unit Model: All staff are now part of small units with clearer line management arrangements. There is a weekly unit meeting which included a reflective group supervision. Feedback from staff is positive and the newly appointed senior practitioners are taking a lead in supporting reflective case discussions.

#### **4. Skilled and stable workforce**

- 4.1 The revised recruitment and retention strategy is being fully implemented and provides a clear plan to reduce dependency on agency staff over a four-year period. There have been ongoing recruitment campaigns and there has been success in recruiting to management vacancies. All Group and Team Manager posts now fully recruited to and this has been a major achievement as the stability of managers is a key factor in developing the service.
- 4.2 Vacancies are slowly reducing with the senior practitioner posts nearly fully recruited and the phased recruitment of tranches of newly qualified social workers. There is a good retention rate of social workers once they complete their first assessed and supported year in employment, which is resulting in an increase of permanent social workers and a gradually maturing and resilient.
- 4.3 The 'Front Line' programme begins on 4<sup>th</sup> September with 8 trainee social workers joining Walsall. They will be offered employment upon successfully completing the programme in August 2018.
- 4.4 Caseloads still remain too high in some parts of the service, namely the Safeguarding and Family Support service and the caseload promise is not yet being realised. This is an important strand of the Walsall recruitment and retention offer and needs to be in place by the end of the year as it contributes to both practice improvement and of workforce stability.

#### **5. Early help early on**

- 5.1 There is a well established Early help Hub (integrated within MASH) and a Early help website used as a point of contact for access to information and resources to support the delivery of Early Help.
- 5.2 The locality model is well established and includes the delivery of:

- Weekly multi agency solution panels – a review of these panels in April showed robust application of Thresholds, good sharing of information and commitment of partners in identifying solutions to support children, young people and families. The panels are being further developed to include discussions around vulnerable locations and themes and the membership is being expected to include adult social care and adult mental health.
- The 0-19 locality teams (based from the Children’s centres) including integrated working between children’s services, health and welfare advice. In September the teams will be joined by CAHMS Tier 2 mental health services and Police. Work is being undertaken to align the Safeguarding Social Work Teams with the locality teams to enhance integrated working between social work and localities.

5.3 The Early help training programme has focussed on developing skills and confidence of professionals in taking on the Lead professional role for children and young people. This has led to an increase of children getting effective help and support through schools. The majority of Health Visitors have also received the training in July 2017 and have started to take on the role of Lead Professional – this will help with shared responsibility of supporting families across the partnership and effectively meeting demand coming through the ‘front door’.