

Audit Committee – 12 November 2012


Post Ofsted Improvement Planning

1. Summary of report:

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with an overview of the developing improvement plan relating to the Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children (SLAC) services and also sets out details of the anticipated improvement notice.

2. Recommendation:

- 2.1 To note the anticipated timescale for the improvement notice to be issued to the Council.
- 2.2 To seek assurances that action is being taken to address the weaknesses identified in the Ofsted inspection report.



Rose Collinson – interim Director (Children’s Services)

23 October 2012

3 Background:

- 3.1 The Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children took place at the end of June and the subsequent report which judged services in Walsall to be inadequate, was published at the end of July. Following the Ofsted judgement, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families wrote to the Leader in August setting out his intention to issue an improvement notice to the Council. This is usual practice following an inadequate inspection outcome.
- 3.2 The Secretary of State for Education has a range of powers he can use in these circumstances, including statutory powers of intervention directing the Council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the necessary and rapid improvements required in children’s services. However, in his letter, he recognised that the Council had taken rapid and decisive action following the inspection and indicated he was minded to issue an Improvement Notice.
- 3.3 An initial draft improvement notice was received in mid September for comment. This was followed up with detailed work with the DfE to ensure that the notice better reflected the safeguarding improvement priorities for children in Walsall.
- 3.4 An updated draft notice was received from the DfE in mid October. This version takes significant account of our feedback over the last few weeks and is much more firmly focused on the necessary improvements we need to make across children’s services.

- 3.5 Following review by the DfE legal and policy teams the final draft notice will be sent to the Leader of the Council for comment at which point the Council has 7 working days to engage with the DfE regarding any remaining concerns and issues. The improvement notice will then be formally issued and will enter the public domain. Copies will be circulated to Members of the Audit Committee if it is published before the meeting.
- 3.6 An independently chaired Walsall Children's Improvement Board was established in September 2012. The role of the Board is intrinsically linked to the targets and milestones in the improvement notice. Its core purpose relates specifically to oversight of the rapid and sustainable improvements required in safeguarding services for children and young people in Walsall.
- 3.7 This includes assurance that the Children and Young People Partnership and the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board provide robust and complementary leadership of effective partnership arrangements at all levels to secure positive outcomes for children and their families.
- 3.8 **Appendix 1** sets out the Terms of Reference and governance for the Children's Improvement Board.

4. Current Position

- 4.1 In October the Children's Improvement Board received a refreshed, strategic draft Improvement Plan. The draft Improvement Plan has been updated to reflect the areas of focus in the draft Improvement Notice and now includes 3 distinct themes:
- Quality and effectiveness of front line practice
 - Improving the quality and effectiveness of partnerships and governance
 - Capacity, capability and culture.
- 4.2 The improvement plan is aligned to the Ofsted recommendations. It is intended that the required action / objective as detailed in the Improvement Notice will also be included alongside the outcome. In September the Improvement Board resolved to adopt the standard Red, Amber, and Green monitoring process against each objective from the improvement notice rather than each individual Ofsted action.
- 4.3 A multi agency operational delivery group is being established, the first meeting of this will occur early November. The purpose of the group is to ensure the actions as required by the Improvement Notice are appropriately reflected, resourced and delivered, oversee delivery of the delivery plans, monitor and manage risks associated with the delivery of the improvement plan and work collaboratively to provide the Board with requested information and provide ongoing support to the Board in the delivery of its role and remit.
- 4.4 The improvement plan details the outcomes to be achieved in order to ensure children's services in Walsall secure rapid and sustainable improvements and are set out overleaf:

Quality and effectiveness of front line practice:

- All Children and Young People are effectively protected and not left at significant harm.
- Clear and effective arrangements for making contacts and referral to children's social care.
- Improved quality and timeliness of initial and core assessments.
- Statutory timescales are met for the review of Child Protection cases.
- An improved response to Child Protection referrals, with discussions with police and other agencies taking place in a timely manner, in all relevant circumstances, as set out in Working Together and any subsequent statutory guidance.
- Provision of a range of preventative services in place which avoid unnecessary family breakdown and target support for children with additional needs.
- Established whole system framework to managing families' pathways from early help to statutory intervention.
- Clear quality assurance and performance framework in place that balances qualitative and quantitative information, delivered by all managers and practitioners across the partnership, which supports continuing improvement in the quality and effectiveness of support to vulnerable children.
- The quality of individual reflective and line management supervision ensures safe and effective practice.
- Feedback from individual children, families and staff improves and shapes practice.

Improving the quality and effectiveness of partnership and governance:

- Clear multi-agency thresholds in place, shared with and understood by all partners, which ensure children access appropriate services and that there is consistency in referrals across all agencies.
- A borough wide multi-agency quality audit system ensures that case work and recording, management oversight and decision making is robust and rigorous.
- Evidence of the implementation of recommendations from serious case reviews and complaints and their subsequent impact in shaping and informing practice.

- The Clinical Commissioning Group has effective arrangements in place to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities with clarity about the role and remit of designated and named professionals and the impact of their strategic professional leadership.

Capacity, capability and culture:

- A comprehensive programme of training, mentoring and continuous professional development for all social care staff, in combination with partners is in place which ensures staff have the skills to complete high quality and timely assessments.
 - Policies, procedures and practice standards support safe, good quality multi-agency practice with children and families.
 - Social workers' responsibilities and workloads are kept under review to ensure they are clearly and tightly defined and that staff have a manageable and equitable range of work consistent with their level of experience and competence.
 - A culture of accountability is developed with managers, staff and partners holding each other to account with action taken when required to challenge poor and unacceptable performance.
 - Elected members act as effective and caring corporate parents for looked after children.
 - Effective assurance arrangements are in place within the council and across the partnership in line with DfE statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children Services.
 - The ambition for children and young people across Walsall is understood and endorsed in practice throughout the council and across the partnership.
- 4.5 Analysis of the data currently collected has identified some significant gaps in both using and applying the data to ensure evidence informed practice in the use of qualitative measures to drive forward improvement. Planned improvement activities include work to address these current weaknesses.
- 4.6 A key improvement driver will be the establishment of minimum practice standards and management framework across the children's social care workforce.

5. Resource and legal considerations:

- 5.1 A resource plan is in the process of being drawn up and will be shared with the committee at their next meeting.

6. Governance Issues / Citizen impact:

6.1 Improving Walsall's children's services will ensure Walsall's ambition for children to be healthy, happy and safe, to be loved, valued and respected and to have high aspirations for a successful future is fulfilled. This is underpinned by the Children and Young People Partnerships values which are:

- We respect all children, young people and their families – by listening carefully to their views and acting on them wherever possible.
- We are open and trustworthy – by making decisions transparently, involving others and doing what we say we will.
- We believe in the potential of all children – by doing all we can to support their development and talents.
- We are caring and responsible – by acting as good corporate parents and going the 'extra mile' in our supportive approaches to all children.
- We will protect vulnerable children and young people – by taking firm urgent action when needed, sharing information and not tolerating oppressive behaviour.
- We engage with children and young people, helping to empower them through supporting their aspirations and giving them responsibility.
- We celebrate and support cultural diversity and children's sense of identity.

7. Performance and risk management issues:

7.1 Failure to adequately deliver sustained improvements to services and meet the requirements of the Improvement Notice risks the safety of children and young people. Delivery of activity outlined in the Improvement Plan and detailed in delivery plans will be risk assessed in line with organisational practice and managed accordingly.

7.2 Improved performance within services is paramount to delivering the requirements of the Improvement Notice, addressing the issues raised in the Ofsted report and restoring confidence in children services and the Council. Learning from the development of a combined quality assurance and performance management framework will inform a refresh of existing performance management framework.

7.3 In addition to the monthly monitoring from the Improvement Board, the delivery of improvements as identified in the improvement plan will be monitored on a six monthly basis by Department for Education (DfE) via written progress reports from the Chair, supplemented by a report from the Leader of the Council. The first report by the Chair of the Improvement Board and by the Leader to the DfE will be required two months after the publication of the Improvement Notice to the Council.

8. Equality Implications:

8.1 The improvements identified will address inequalities in current service delivery and support and protect the most vulnerable and at risk children. In line with Council procedure service delivery will take into action the diverse communities being served and support cultural diversity and children's sense of identity.

8.2 There are no equality implications as a result of this report.

9. Consultation:

9.1 Finance and performance management colleagues have been consulted.

Background papers:

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Walsall Children's Improvement Board

Draft Terms of Reference

October 2012

1. Background

- 1.1 A Peer Review was completed in March 2012 and this was followed by an Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services of Walsall Council and its partners in June 2012. Children's Safeguarding services were judged to be inadequate and services for Looked after Children were judged to be adequate, but with a need to reduce delay and drift and to improve quality assurance processes. Overall the Inspection found, of the 22 service areas inspected, 8 to be 'inadequate'. The inspection report identifies immediate changes that are required to address areas of risk as well as longer term strategic changes to improve partnership working and commissioning arrangements.
- 1.2 In response to these recommendations, elected Members, officers and partner agencies across Walsall are determined to deliver rapid, visible and sustainable improvements to children's services. The Walsall Children and Young People's Services Improvement Board (WIB) has been established to oversee the development and implementation of the agreed Improvement Plan of the Children and Young People's Partnership and monitor compliance with the delivery of key deliverables and milestones.
- 1.3 The Board will assist the Council and its partner agencies, through advice and challenge, to ensure that services meet the expectations for the safety of children in the Borough.
- 1.4 The Board will have an unambiguous focus on securing the necessary rapid improvements needed to safeguarding services for children and young people.

2. Approach to Improvement

- 2.1 The Board will oversee progress through monitoring, challenging and supporting the actions in the Improvement Plan, tackling the areas of greatest risk first and laying the foundations for more effective practice. This will include monitoring targets set out in the plan and checking that

- improvements are embedded through quality assurance and scrutiny. It will provide critical assessment and external challenge to improvements to ensure they are robustly implemented and remain focussed on positive outcomes for children.
- 2.2 The Board will be independently chaired, by Mr Chris Spencer, supported by invited senior representatives from the Children's and Young People's Partnership constituent members. The Chair of the Walsall Improvement Board will provide progress reports to the Parliamentary Under Secretary for State for Children and Families every quarter with a copy to the Council Cabinet and Leader of the Council.
- 2.3 The first written progress report from the Chair is required 2 months after the Improvement Notice has been issued. The Leader of the Council is also required to provide a report on progress in the same time frame as the report from the Chair of the Improvement Board.
- 2.4 The DCS will provide summary progress reports to;
- Cabinet (Walsall MBC constitution part 2 7.01)
 - the Portfolio Holder Children's Services every month
 - Children's Scrutiny Panel on a regular basis (Walsall MBC constitution part 2 6.01)
 - Audit Committee every 6 months (Walsall MBC constitution part 3 2.11)
 - Walsall Safeguarding Children Board and Young Peoples Safeguarding Inspection Team (SIT) each quarter.
- 2.4 The focus of Walsall's Improvement Plan is to deliver improved safeguarding services in Walsall and also take account of the needs and priorities of children looked after by the Council. This Plan is focused on the immediate actions that need to be undertaken to accelerate and sustain improvement and to provide the foundations for continuous improvement.
- 2.5 There will be a strong emphasis to ensure that the improvements are embedded and sustainable. Evidencing the improvements will be one of the measures used for determining whether the changes have had the desired outcome. The evidence will be quantitative as well as qualitative.
- 2.6 The Improvement Plan will be driven by the Improvement Board. The purpose of the Board is to ensure effective, cross-partnership oversight of improvements, holding partner agencies to account for delivery of

improvements, enabling it to deliver the requirements outlined in the Improvement Notice and the Ofsted report

3. Membership

3.1 The members of the Children's Improvement Board will consist of the following:

Independent Chair

Mr Chris Spencer

Council

Councillor Rachel Andrew – Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Walsall Council

Councillor Keith Chambers - member of Audit Committee, Walsall Council.

Paul Sheehan - Chief Executive, Walsall Council

NHS

Richard Kirby - Chief Executive of Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust

Salma Ali - Accountable Officer Designate for Walsall CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) & also Director of Nursing for Black Country Cluster

Helen Hipkiss - Programme Consultant Safeguarding Children & Adults and Health Visiting. West Midlands NHS.

Schools

Gary Thornton – Chair of Walsall Primary, Nursery, Special Schools Forum and Head Teacher, Palfrey Junior School

Keith Whittlestone – Chair of Walsall Secondary Head Teachers Forum and Head Teacher of Joseph Leckie Academy

Safeguarding Board

Jane Evans – Independent Chair, Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board

West Midlands Police

Dave Sturman - Chief Superintendent, West Midlands Police

Department for Education – Participant Observer

Joanne Holmes (September - October 2012)

Jane Hopkinson (November 2012 onward)

Local Government Association – Participant Observer

Claire Burgess - Children's Improvement Adviser

- 3.2 The Board will be served by the attendance of the Executive Director of Children's Services and other officers by invitation or in support of presented documentation. Others may also be invited to advise the Board or to provide additional expertise when required.
- 3.3 Each meeting will consider progress and make necessary decisions and recommendations in response to the rate and depth of progress. The work of the Board will not be held up by the absence of any member. For this reason, it is essential that if a member of the Board cannot attend, a named deputy with decision making powers attends in their absence.
- 3.4 The Board will meet monthly. The first meeting of the Board was on the 17th September 2012.

4. Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 The Board will commission reports from all of the safeguarding agencies. Its Chairman shall visit agencies and meet appropriate staff. The Chairman will be empowered to review documentation including individual care data.

The Board will examine key priorities holding agencies to account. A cross cutting theme is the impact of partnership arrangements.

- 4.2 The roles and responsibilities of the Board are as follows:

- 4.2.1 To hold organisations to account for the progress against the requirements of the improvement plan including the integration of performance data and progress reports with a focus on ensuring these actions improve outcomes.
- 4.2.2 Challenge progress of the Council, post inspection, through an assessment of partner/key stakeholder views, including the views of service users and children and young people.
- 4.2.3 Advise on the implementation of the change programme, review risk management and consideration of issues as they arise. This includes issues outside of the scope of the programme but which need to be flagged and brought to the attention of the Board.
- 4.2.4 Consider reports arising from investigations and audits of practice.
- 4.2.5 Ensure that an assessment of progress is informed by the views of front-line staff.
- 4.2.6 Sign off outputs from the programme as having been delivered to time/cost/quality.

- 4.2.7 Agree future work plans between Board meetings or decide on changes to the programme.
 - 4.2.8 Consider reports on wider improvements within children services.
 - 4.2.9 Other areas as required subject to development and other information received.
- 4.3 The Board will be supported in the delivery of these roles and responsibilities by the Multi Agency Operational Delivery group.

5. Administration

- 5.1 The Council is responsible for the preparation of agenda, minutes and papers for the meeting of the Board, in consultation with the independent Chair and received by board members no later than 5 working days before each meeting by email.

6. Success factors

- 6.1 All actions in the Improvement Plan are fully implemented and embedded.
- 6.2 Improved Performance against agreed measures has been achieved, sustained and there is evidence of *impact*.
- 6.3 There is clear evidence (externally validated by peer review etc) that the Improvement Plan has led to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 6.4 Evidence that leadership and capacity within children services has achieved significant improvement and there is clear evidence that the service will be capable of achieving an Ofsted judgement of at least 'good' overall by 2014.

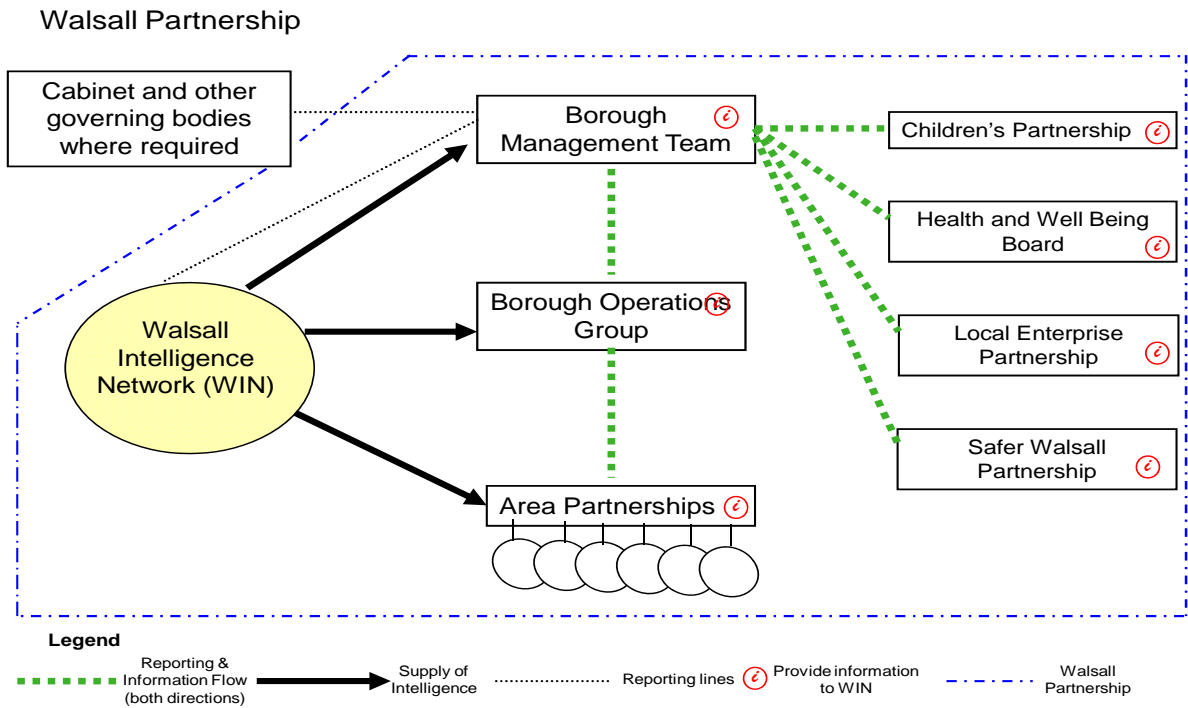
7. Dissolution of the Board

- 7.1 The Board will be dissolved by the decision of the Secretary of State once all the requirements of the programme have been met in full and there is evidence that improvement is embedded and sustainable.

Appendix 1 Governance

a.) Wider Partnership arrangements

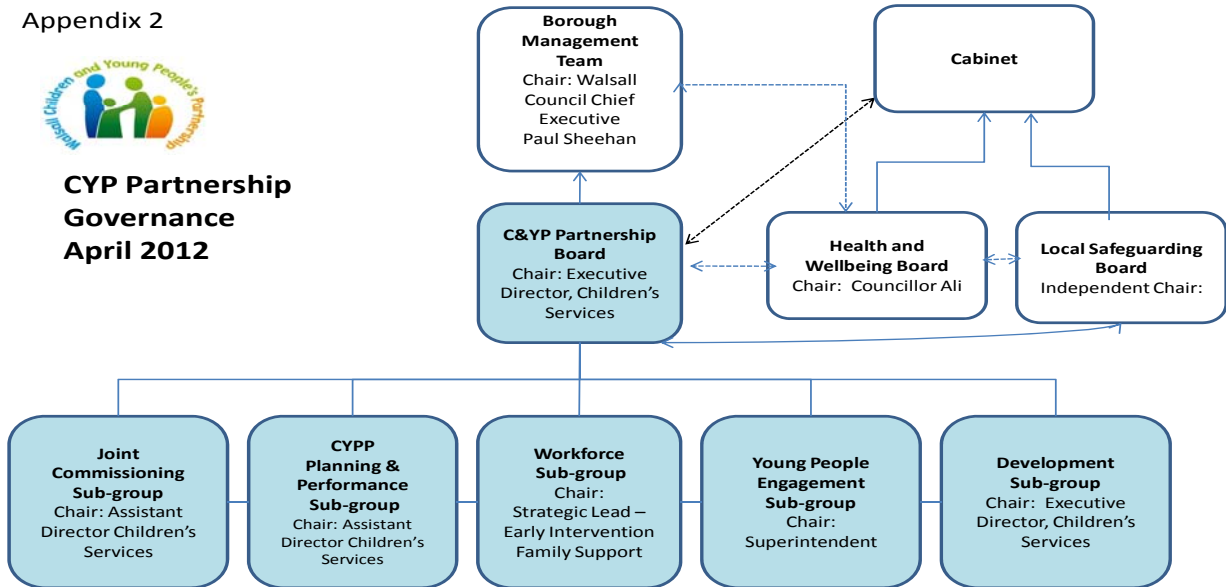
The Borough Management Team acts as the Local Strategic Partnership body and oversees the 6 Area Partnerships and the 4 key Partnership Boards. These existing arrangements will be revised following a recent peer review of borough wide strategic partnership arrangements.



Currently the Health and Well Being Board is a shadow board and there is ongoing discussion regarding the relationship and structure of the Children and Young People Partnership Board with the Health and Well Being Board.

b.) Children and Young Peoples Partnership

The Partnership structure is shown in the diagram below and how it connects to the wider partnership arrangement through the linkage between the CYPP Board and the Borough Management Team.



c.) Proposed governance structure for Improvement Board

The proposed Governance Structure reflects the terms of reference and the Improvement Notice.

