

## **Bi-annual Progress Report on Safeguarding & Looked After Children**

### **Introduction**

1. At a meeting of the Committee in June 2012 Members agreed to receive a six monthly update on key children's safeguarding issues. This report updates the Committee on key local and national safeguarding developments since July 2015.
2. The operating environment for Local Authorities continues to change rapidly. Every area of Council business is touched by a national context characterised by huge financial pressures on public spending and significant national policy change. Children's services are no exception however, in York; we are committed to carefully prioritising and organising our services at a local level to enable us to navigate the changes ahead and in order to maintain safe and effective services.

### **City of York – Children's Safeguarding Developments**

3. **Overview**

The review period has seen an extensive programme of self-scrutiny, review and development across the Local Authority's safeguarding arrangements. Overall the findings from this work present a positive and reassuring picture. However, there is no complacency and an ongoing development and improvement programme overseen by both the Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services remains in place and is actively pursued.

4. A high level summary of activity during the assurance review period includes;

5. **Supervision**

During this period the Local Authority has produced *Our Supervision Improvement Journey – October 2015*. Presented at **Annex A** this high level report reflects on the work over the past two years to improve the delivery and effectiveness of supervision for frontline social care staff.

This report also presents a snapshot of the findings from a recent staff survey in relation to their supervision.

6. The third annual deep dive audit of supervision commenced in November 2015 and the outcomes of this work will be presented to the February 2016 Local Safeguarding Children Board meeting.
7. **Child in Need Service – Identifying Strengths and Areas for Development from Case File Audits**  
The Child in Need Service has, since establishment in January 2014, embarked on a journey of continuous learning and development. Case file audits and learning from this activity; have been instrumental in achieving this ambition.
8. i. Progress made and lessons learned in 2014  
During 2014, 84 case file audits were undertaken. The management group found their way and learned how best to complete these, however, recognised that case file audits were not systematically shared with allocated Child in Need Practitioners and therefore not providing all with the opportunities to celebrate successes and consider areas for development.
9. ii. Developments in 2015  
In January 2015, 83 case file audits were undertaken, and over 90% were shared with allocated Child in Need Practitioners. Of those shared 100% of children's records on the children's case management system (RAISE) detail the content of this discussion, including strengths, areas for development and actions to complete.
10. In January 2015 the Child in Need Service aspired to share learning from audit activity within and across the three locality teams. In September 2015 the first of a six monthly Review Audit Activity Management Meeting (RAAMM) was held and which reviewed all strengths identified and areas for development. This has been circulated within the Child in Need Service by way of poster and leaflet for each member of staff - see **Annex B**.
11. York's Safeguarding Children Board undertook an audit review of children receiving services from the Child in Need Service. We shared that very positive response and learning at our three monthly Practice Development Workshop.

12. iii. Plans for 2016

The Child in Need Service Manager will attend bi-monthly locality team meetings with a standard agenda item to disseminate learning from audit activity across the service.

13. Child in Need Practitioners and Planning and Reviewing Officers will be encouraged to independently reflect on the findings of audit activity, consider the strengths that they can build on and how you might learn from others. The management group will continue to attend RAAMM and aim to share learning, by way of poster and leaflet, each time.

14. The service recognises the challenge for Practice Managers to audit case files about children in their own teams and this is because they are often so heavily involved, and that makes it difficult, sometimes, to be objective. A change in practice for us, in 2016, will see each Practice Manager audit one case file from within their own team and one from another. Practice Managers will share all audits and this will support cross learning, with Practice Managers talking and sharing ideas with Child in Need Practitioners who are not in their own teams.

15. **Replacement of RAISE (CSC - client management system) – with MOSAIC**

In March 2016 Children's Social Care will 'Go Live' with a new state-of-the-art Case Management System called 'MOSAIC'. MOSAIC is in use in 44 Local Authorities nationally.

16. MOSAIC represents a significant financial investment by City of York Council in Children's Social Care and is driven by a strong commitment to ensure that systems and processes support effective practice and help achieve the best possible outcome for vulnerable children and young people and their families in the City.

17. The decision to replace the existing Case Management System used by Children's Social Care, called 'RAISE', was taken in April 2014 and a Project Board subsequently constituted and Chaired by Assistant Director of Children's Specialist Services. RAISE had been the primary system in use for 10 years and it was acknowledged that it was no longer able to deliver what York needed to continue its improvement journey and achieve the Vision established for Children's Social Care.

18. MOSAIC was chosen, following a comprehensive and rigorous procurement process in which a number of systems were demonstrated to stakeholders, including front-line staff. MOSAIC offers a range of

functions not available on RAISE, yet does so in a modern, easy-to-use and intuitive way with an emphasis on reducing the screen time required. Unlike RAISE, MOSAIC was designed to reflect the need identified by Professor Eileen Munro in her national review of child protection to move away from overly bureaucratic processes and focus on outcomes for children and their families.

19. MOSAIC looks and feels very different from what has been in use before in York. MOSAIC will enable for the first time the child's journey with York Council to be in one place, in an instantly accessible way, with Early Help, SEND, Family Focus (Troubled Families) and Children's Social Care all on one system.
20. MOSAIC enables York to meet current national safeguarding concerns, for example, Child Sexual Exploitation and areas of current national focus, such as Adoption and outcomes for Looked After Children. MOSAIC also enables a clear focus on the local priorities of high quality and timely assessments and the involvement and participation – 'the Voice' - of the child in all that is done to help them fulfil their potential.
21. In these circumstances, March 2016 will be a significant milestone for City of York Children's Services.
22. **Referral and Assessment [R&A] Arrangements**  
There have been significant further developments in the Local Authority's Referral and Assessment arrangements. The review period has seen;
  - i. *Police colleagues now embedded in R&A Service*  
This provides access, where appropriate, to real time Police and CYC information to inform the best response to incoming referrals.
  - ii. *Use of the multi agency referral form*  
Use of this form is growing but not consistently across all agencies and with evidence of poor Quality Assurance arrangements in some.
  - iii. *Increased partner agency contributions to the single assessment pilot*  
Not consistently achieved across all agencies yet, this partnership work (initially with health colleagues) to streamline partner agency input to single assessments (in line with working together) continues. Challenges remain as to how Children's Social Care [CSC] can efficiently and effectively access health information to check who

might be involved with the child/ family. In the pilot this has been through the health visiting and school nurse service however the capacity within these services to do this check is proving to be a barrier.

- iv. *Direct contact with referrers when referrals do not progress to an assessment to explain reasons.*

In response to feedback from colleagues wanting more information about why a referral into CSC has not resulted in a single assessment, the R&A social workers are now routinely contacting by telephone the referrer to explain the reasons (in addition to the standard letter issued to referrers). Hopefully this will both reassure the referrer and contribute to more appropriate referrals into CSC in the future.

- v. *Improved signposting to early help (including advice service)*

Again, as a result of feedback from partner agencies, the social workers in R&A are routinely signposting referrers and families to a range of early help options including the advice service.

- vi. *Improved confidence across the workforce in responding to CSE*

CSC service managers are reporting a greater confidence in the social work response to managing concerns for vulnerable teenagers – particularly when the referrer may think there is a risk of CSE. This has been facilitated by the appointment of an advanced social worker to oversee the response to the most vulnerable young people – particularly those where there are concerns for CSE and/ or missing from home and care.

- 23. It is widely recognised that making the right first decision in responding to concerns for children is crucial. The brief summary above presents a strong picture but highlights also where there is more to do across the multi agency partnership.

#### 24. **Children's Social Care - Vision Update**

An update on the Vision for Children's Social Care was published in October 2015. This was informed by extensive staff engagement and feedback, which culminated in an all CSC staff event held in April 2015 and attended by the President of the ADCS. A copy of this updated vision is presented at **Annex C**.

25. **Disclosure and Barring Service Checks - Update**

The DBS status of all CSES staff is audited on a regular basis to ensure the systems for maintaining checks and renewals is working effectively. The most recent audit considered all those members of staff (currently 351) for whom a DBS check is required.

26. Of this cohort:

- 30 members of staff had passed the date for their 3 yearly re-check (14 have now undertaken a re-check and a further 16 applications are in progress).
- 7 members of staff were identified as requiring a re-check during January 2016 and these have been sent a reminder.
- No members of staff were identified as not having a DBS.

27. A further audit will be undertaken in March 2016.

28. We are currently reviewing the DBS monitoring arrangements for Independent Visitors and will bring a further update in the July 2016 report.

29. **Principal Social Worker [PSW] Updates / Blog**

In accordance with Recommendation 14 of the Munro review of Child protection 2011, the Principal Children and Families Social Worker takes *“lead responsibility for practice in the Local Authority”* and reports *“the views and experiences of the front line to all levels of management”*.

30. The PSW’s primary responsibilities include ensuring that there is a coherent plan for staff development and training, taking responsibility for the assessment process for Newly Qualified Social Workers through the Assessed and Supported (first) Year in Employment, and leading on the provision of good quality placement and learning opportunities for students.

31. The PSW works through regional and national networks and links, including the universities and with the Chief Social Worker, anticipating developments in practice and policy and offering advice to the Local Authority in delivering effective responses.

32. The PSW leads on sharing learning from audits, reviews and SCRs. A snapshot of the work of York’s PSW for the review period and ongoing includes:

- i. *Introducing and embedding use of evidence based tools and methods:*
  - Training long term teams in an evidence based assessment of parental capacity to change.
  - Key assessment methodology in tackling long term neglect and substance misuse
  - Partnership with the NSPCC to pilot evidence based pre-birth assessment model
  - Delivering workshops to support learning and embed new practice.
- ii. *Enhancing partnership working on multi-agency assessments through developing and supporting a process for direct contributions from partner agencies:*
  - This will include a programme of work supported by a seconded specialist from the NSPCC.
- iii. *Developing skills in analysis and critical thinking:*
  - Delivering workshops in assessment planning, use of evidence based methods and tools, critical thinking and analysis.

### 33. **Storyboards**

As part of a programme to ensure that there is clear understanding of the Local Authority's response to key strategic priorities a series of high level Storyboards have been produced in conjunction with relevant partners. These storyboards combine to present a suit of information that helps professionals understand the strategic planning to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people in the City. These storyboards include:

- i. Assessment,
- ii. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy,
- iii. Children Looked After,
- iv. Children Missing Education,
- v. Child Sexual Exploitation,
- vi. Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB),
- vii. Early Help,
- viii. Family, Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)

- ix. Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)
- x. Neglect,
- xi. Prevent,
- xii. Domestic Abuse
- xiii. Virtual School.

34. From January 2016 all of these documents will be available to view on the Children's Trust Website at:

<http://www.yorok.org.uk/workforce2014/storyboards.htm>

35. **Peer Challenge and Support – Children's Specialist Services, York**

The 12 month project provides a unique opportunity to explore and develop local and regional approaches to peer challenge, support and evaluation. The project establishes a fixed term, senior officer post (seconded from another Local Authority), to lead on and coordinate this work. The role will take a strengths based approach and have a focus on learning and improvement opportunities.

36. If successful, the challenge and support will be experienced by staff and partners as routine and embedded within the service and wider partnership; the focus and priorities clearly understood and consistent with wider vision, objectives and approach.

37. The approach starts from a position that sharing knowledge, exploring different approaches and perspectives can only help to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

38. Some of the initial priorities for the role, which relate to the work of the York LSCB, are:

*i. A review of the Independent Reviewing Officer Unit.*

This work provides an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the local approach to case conferences with a view to establishing a local model and framework for assessing and managing risk. A recent increase in numbers of children subject to child protection plans and an increase in the number of children subject to second or subsequent plans would also benefit from further analysis. This work should involve staff and practitioners, including partner agencies.



ii. *Learning Lessons Review.*

An opportunity to test out systemic ideas and approaches within a context of case reviews. Equally, the role could provide a potential capacity to support the value of case reviews which highlight and promote learning from good or outstanding practice.

iii. *Support the development of the York Joint Panel.*

This will provide an opportunity to review the purpose and function of the panel, including consideration of other regional arrangements.

iv. *Quality assurance of out of area commissioned placements.*

A priority will be to establish a framework for the commissioning, contracting and quality assurance of placements. This work will support the Innovations Fund Project and a priority of implementing health passports for looked after children.

## **Looked After Children**

### 39. **Refreshed Looked After Children's Strategy 2016 – 2020**

The review period has seen considerable work on the development of a refreshed Strategy [2016 -2020] to further improve the outcomes for Looked after Children. Developed in partnership with representatives from over 30 agencies / services and in direct consultation with Looked after Children this new strategy builds on a picture of exiting good outcomes but also heralds a step change in the ambition and approach to the care for all looked after children. The overarching message from the consultation work and which is now carried into this new strategy is that '*good enough, is not good enough*' for our looked after children.

### 40. **Corporate Parenting Board Developments**

As part of the development of this new strategy the Local Authority has undertaken a detailed review of its Corporate Parenting scrutiny, challenge and support arrangements. This review has included a presentation to Group Leaders setting out options for further strengthening and widening the role of elected members in relation to Looked after Children on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015. Following this meeting a newly constituted Corporate Parenting Board [CPB] with cross party representation met on 8<sup>th</sup> December to receive presentations on;

- i. The draft Looked after Children Strategy '***Good enough is not good enough***' 2016 – 2020

- ii. ***Bring Them Home*** – the Local Authority’s innovation programme to significantly strengthen the local fostering offer to further reduce the number of children who need to move out of the City for their care arrangements.
- iii. ***2015 U Matter Survey*** – consultations findings from Looked after Children and Young People

41. Each of these presentations was considered by the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) and informed a subsequent debate about the future composition, governance and work plan for the Board.
42. Notably, this Board resolved to seek full Council endorsement for the new strategy and in particular confirm across the widest forum of elected members the Council’s collective ambition, actions and desired outcomes for our looked after children.
43. The CPB also resolved to continue to operate as a public committee and in this way ensure maximum profile and transparency in terms of the Council’s commitment to and the progress of this group of children and young people.

### **Activity Overview**

44. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 there were 188 children looked after by the local authority. This compares with 210 looked after children on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015. A brief analysis of this cohort of children and young people highlights:
  - 8 children placed for adoption who are likely to leave public care during 2015
  - The number of children placed in external independent foster agency placements [IFA] (with an average annual cost of £48k) has increased from 16 on the 1st January 2015 to 21. These placements were required because the needs of the looked after children concerned could not be met within the York foster carer community. A review of our local fostering strategy is underway to develop a wider more resilient local fostering offer.
  - Helpfully, all new IFA placements have been commissioned under a new regional White Rose local authority framework with reduced and set weekly rates. These placements are less expensive than

those previously spot purchased. Many of these placements are within York's boundaries, therefore minimising disruption for the young people in relation to their school placements and their contact with family members.

- The number of young people placed in external residential placements (with an average annual cost of £166k) went from 16 on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 to 14 at present.

45. The largest cohort remains 16-18 year olds with 27 looked after young people, who will all leave care in 2014-16, many of them staying put with their former foster carers, in preparation for future education training and employment and independent living at a later age.
46. The next large cohort are young people aged 14-15 with 19 young people. This means that 14-17 year olds account for 25 % of all looked after children and young people.
47. The overall progress of our Looked after Children continues to be routinely reported to the Corporate Parenting Board.

### **Wider Council Engagement in Safeguarding**

48. During the review period there has been extensive wider Council Officer and Elected Member engagement in children's safeguarding arrangements. A summary of this activity includes;
  - i. Presentation to all Council senior manager group (Service to City) presentation on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation – followed by workshop.
  - ii. Senior social care manager's presentation and workshop with 32 Elected Members (including Leader and Executive Group) on local response to CAS&E.
  - iii. Children's Service Education and Skills, Directorate Management Team attendance at *ItsNotOk* play at York St John's University
  - iv. Fortnightly briefings to Executive Member for Children in relation to various aspects of safeguarding and service delivery, including;
    - Regionalisation of Adoption
    - Performance Reports
    - Responding to CSA&E

- Looked After Children panning
- v. Senior Managers meeting with Chief Executive of CYC to brief on current service approaches, trends and pressures.

## Recommendations

49. Members are invited to:

- i. Note the service developments detailed in paragraphs 3-38 above, in particular:
  - The update on Referrals & Assessment Arrangements at paragraph 22 above
  - The outcome of the most recent DBS audit at paragraph 25-28 above, and agree to receive future updates on this position as part of the assurance reporting cycle.
- ii. Note the work described in the Looked After Children section detailed in paragraph 39 above, to refresh the strategy to improve the outcomes for Looked After children in the City
- iii. Note the details of the wider Council engagement in the children's safeguarding agenda detailed in paragraph 48.

Reason: To fulfil this committee's commitment to receive six monthly updates on key children's safeguarding issues.

## Contact Details

### Author:

Eoin Rush, Assistant Director,  
Children's Specialist Services  
01904 554212

Report Approved

### Chief Officer responsible for the report:

Jon Stonehouse, Director, Children's  
Services, Education and Skills



Date

18 January 2016

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**



**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:** None

**Annexes:**

**Annex A** – Our Supervision Improvement Journey – October 2015

**Annex B1 & B2** – Child in Need Audit summary

**Annex C** – Children’s Social Care - Vision update

**Abbreviations:**

CSC – Children’s Social Care

CPB – Corporate Parenting Board

CYC – City of York Council

DBS – Disclosure & Barring Service

FDAC - Family, Drug and Alcohol Court

PSW – Principal Social Worker

NSPCC – National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children

LSCB – Local Safeguarding Children’s Board

MARAC - Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences

IFA – Independent Foster Agency

R&A - Referral and Assessment

RAAMM - Review Audit Activity Management Meeting