

NORTH YORKSHIRE CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD

Monday 18th January 2010

Post-Inspection Action Plan: Monitoring Arrangements

1.0 Purpose of the Paper

- 1.1 This paper provides the Children's Trust Board with an overview of the monitoring arrangements for the Post-Inspection Action Plan and a brief summary of progress to date.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Board receives an update against the Post-Inspection Action Plan at each meeting.
- 2.2 That, in respect of Recommendation 7, the draft Joint Health Strategy for Looked After Children is considered by the Board members, with the finalised strategy to be approved by the Children's Trust Board at its March meeting.
- 2.3 That, in respect of Recommendation 5, the LDD Strategy Group reports the revised transition protocol and pathway for looked after children with LDD to the Children's Trust Board in March.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 In September 2009 Ofsted carried out an inspection of safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children in North Yorkshire. The inspection report was published by Ofsted on 23 October. North Yorkshire was rated as 'adequate' for safeguarding arrangements and as 'good' for services for looked after children.
- 3.2 The inspection report included eight recommendations which the Children and Young People Service and its partners are required to implement either immediately, within three months or within six months. These recommendations are:

Immediately

1. Produce an action plan from this inspection, to ensure service specific, detailed actions are incorporated relating to the areas for development and priority action arising from the unannounced inspection to enable monitoring by elected members, the Children's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children Board.

2. Utilise the combined resources and expertise of the council and its contractors to prioritise and address the difficulties associated with the Integrated Children's System (ICS).

Within Three Months

3. Undertake a full evaluation of current children's services actual spending to reconcile the need for increased safeguarding services against the current overspend and to ensure strong financial planning that sustains the service operation over the medium and long term.
4. Improve consistency in the quality and timeliness of assessments and child protection investigations.
5. Develop policy, procedure and practice to ensure effective arrangements are in place to support the transition to adult services for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
6. Improve the effectiveness of elected members in their role as corporate parents to support the improvement of outcomes for looked after children.
7. Develop a joint strategy between the county council and the PCT for the delivery of physical, general and mental health services for looked after children.

Within Six Months

8. Conduct further analysis of the increased number of children subject to a child protection plan for more than two years and the increased percentage of children subject to a child protection plan for a second time to inform future service planning and delivery.

- 3.3 At its November meeting the Children's Trust Board approved the Post-Inspection Action Plan which contains a programme of detailed actions required to implement these eight recommendations. This action plan was subsequently submitted to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber.

4.0 Monitoring Arrangements for the Post-Inspection Action Plan

- 4.1 The Children and Young People's Service has established a monitoring structure and process for the Post-Inspection Action Plan.

- 4.2 Each recommendation has been assigned to an Assistant Director, or other appropriate senior manager, to provide leadership and oversight:

Recommendation / Action		Lead Officer (s)
1.1	ICT Infrastructure and Resilience	David Sadler (ICT)
1.2	ICS Programme and functionality	Alan Tucker (CYPS)
1.3	Improvements in the timeliness of assessments	Paul Nixon (CYPS)
1.4	Workforce capacity building	Paul Nixon/ Penny Yeadon (CYPS)
1.5	Customer Service Centre Recording	Gary Fielding (Assistant Chief Executive, NYCC)
2	Address the difficulties with ICS (see 1.2)	Alan Tucker
3.1	Externally driven pressures (budgets/ costs)	Cynthia Welbourn
3.2	Management controls and monitoring	George Bateman (FMS/CYPS)
3.3	Staffing costs drivers	George Bateman/ Paul Nixon
3.4	Child placement drivers	George Bateman/ Paul Nixon
3.5	Forward financial planning	George Bateman/ Cynthia Welbourn
4	Quality and consistency in timeliness of assessments and child protection investigations (See 1.3)	Paul Nixon
5	Transition arrangements for LAC with LDD	Andrew Terry (CYPS)
6	Corporate Parenting	Paul Nixon
7	Joint Health Strategy for LAC	Sue Metcalfe/ Gary Hardman (NHS NYY)/ Andrew Terry (CYPS)
8	Analysis of Child Protection Plan data and trends	Paul Nixon/ Ann McMorris (LSCB)

- 4.3 A monitoring Core Team has been established to monitor progress against the whole action plan on a monthly basis. Monitoring comprises an overview of each of the 162 individual actions, and high level monitoring of each recommendation and sub-section to identify any risks to delivery, to resolve delivery problems, to and monitor the evidence of impact from the actions. A reconstituted ICS Project Board will provide additional detailed monitoring of actions pertaining to Recommendations 1 and 2.

- 4.4 The Core Team and ICS Project Board both meet monthly, but these meetings are scheduled at fortnightly intervals. This means that every two weeks there will be senior level monitoring and challenge of action plan implementation.

5.0 Current Progress: Brief Summary

- 5.1 Good progress is being made against much of the Post-Inspection Action Plan. Of the 122 actions relating to Recommendations 1 and 2 (Immediate Action), 43 have already been completed, and all others are in progress. Anecdotal evidence received from practitioners suggests that the speed and resilience of ICT networks has improved. The ICS and Performance Recovery Programme is beginning to help in reclaiming social work practice time by making the ICS system more reliable, effective and user-friendly, and providing extensive support for users. A Business Process Mapping exercise is well advanced and this should lead to further improvements in working practices and the ICT tools used to support them. The availability and quality of performance data within the ICS system is greatly improved though not yet ready to replace the spreadsheets. Expectations on frontline staff in respect of Initial and Core Assessments have been standardised and streamlined, supported by clearer prioritisation for managers in respect of assuring standards and timeliness. There remains more to do, and the outcome of the Business Process Mapping will provide the basis for implementing a consolidated set of simplifications to the ICS programme which will match more closely agreed practice standards in the County. The work also addresses some of the underlying differences and inconsistencies in practice between different teams which have been a complicating factor in both ICS implementation and some aspects of performance relating to timeliness of assessments. Practice Guidance and next-phase training are planned for February and March to provide a secure launch to the improvements.
- 5.2 Recommendation 3, which concerns resource management, is being taken forward as part of the County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget process for 2010/11. This includes analysis of cost drivers, workloads, staffing levels and vacancies. The budget proposals under consideration include additional resources approaching £2M to take account of increased costs (including a forecast placement model) arising from increased numbers of LAC and to provide 12 additional Assessment and Safeguarding Social Workers because of sustained referral pressures. It has been agreed that approval to funding for the 12 additional Social Workers should not await the final outcome of the budget process so that we can proceed immediately with recruitment. Combined with the 9 additional posts for Assessment and Safeguarding Social Workers which were funded by the Directorate in the current financial year, the total increase of 21 Social Workers will have strengthened our A&S capacity by 33% over a 15 month period. As we are aware of the national shortage of Social

Workers, we are adopting a multi-stranded and continuous recruitment/capacity building campaign. This also reflects progress against commitments in the Action Plan under 1.4 and 3.0. Careful management of LAC placements continues both for appropriateness and efficiency. Though numbers have increased in-year on average by around 12%, increased expenditure has been in the region of 4-6% , which reflects the fact that despite pressures we have retained a balanced placement mix as far as possible. This is a widespread phenomenon nationally. North Yorkshire's increased expenditure is significantly lower than in many other Authorities, reflecting a good underpinning strategy, but the pressures continue and require very active management

- 5.3 Monthly performance data for November suggests that actions taken to implement Recommendation 4, concerning the timeliness of assessments, are beginning to have an impact. In November the timeliness of initial assessments improved to 62.3% (2008/09 outturn was 55.2%) and timeliness of core assessments improved to 87.3% (2008/09 outturn was 69.7%). However, this data reflects only one month, and better performance must be sustained and improved further throughout the remainder of this year and into 2010/11.
- 5.4 Recommendations 6 and 8 are on track.
- 5.5 Recommendation 5, concerning transitions arrangements for looked after children with LDD, is in progress. Work is ongoing to develop a revised joint protocol and pathway on transitions for looked after children. The Board may wish to consider this revised protocol and pathway its next meeting.
- 5.6 Recommendation 7, concerning the Joint Health Strategy for Looked After Children, a draft of the Strategy will be presented at the Children's Trust Board, following the Multi-Agency Looked After Children's Partnership (MALAP) on the 13th November. This Strategy will then be the subject of consultation, with a final version to be presented at the Trust Board meeting in March.
- 5.7 For more detailed information about the implementation of any aspect of the action plan please contact David O'Brien, CYPS Performance and Outcomes Manager, david.f.o'brien@northyorks.gov.uk

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