

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	CHILDREN AND LEARNING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	11 FEBRUARY 2021
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

<b><u>CONTACT DETAILS</u></b>			
<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Children and Learning</b>	
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#### **STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

Not applicable

#### **BRIEF SUMMARY**

To brief the Panel on progress against the revised Children and Learning Improvement Plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

	(i)	That progress be noted and scrutinised
	(ii)	That there is a further update to Scrutiny Panel in March 2021

#### **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.	The journey for the improvement in the outcomes by Children's Services requires a robust improvement plan, and oversight by the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel.
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#### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

2.	None
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#### **DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)**

	<b>Review of Plan</b>
3.	<p>The Improvement Board convened in January 2021 with a new independent chair; who is an experienced Director of Children's Services. In addition to the Executive Director's report and the improvement plan review, the Board received presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The staff reference group</li> <li>• Learning from self-evaluation and audit</li> <li>• Quality Assurance (Quarterly report)</li> <li>• Strategic Development</li> </ul>

4. The service provided a performance report to the Improvement Board in January 2021 and this is attached as Appendix 1. The performance report contains an overview of performance across the service and this is summarised below:

### Overview of performance across Children and Learning KPI's

#### GOING WELL OR BETTER

- Timeliness of MASH decision making maintained during pandemic
- Timeliness of single assessment completion is good
- Percentage of authorised care plans remains consistent
- Percentage of children leaving care via adoption route remains favourable
- Percentage of authorised pathways plans remains good
- Percentage of care leavers in touch and in suitable accommodation remains consistent

#### ONES TO WATCH

- Number of contacts is high throughout the autumn period
- Number of unaccompanied asylum seekers has increased
- Percentage of re-referrals has increased
- Rate of Initial Child Protection Conferences shows an increasing trend over the autumn
- There are better levels of contact with children with CPP, but performance needs to further improve
- Timeliness of LAC visiting is stable, but needs to improve
- Early Help data needs to be confirmed by data team

#### THINGS TO DO BETTER

- Sickness absence has increased
- Caseloads remain too high in assessment, Protection and Court (PACT) and Looked after Children (LAC) teams
- The level of agency workers remains too high
- Audit completion remains low, with an impact on the Year of the Child cohort
- ICPC timeliness performance remains low
- Rates of sec.47, children subject to child protection planning and looked after children are high
- Education Training and Employment engagement for care leavers has reduced since the last Board
- Use of IFA shows a small increase and in house foster placements shows a reducing trend.

5. The new chair has outlined her intent to work with the Director and Quality Manager to work on a schedule for 2021/22 that focuses the Board's attention on the key improvement issues for the service (including response to the whistleblowing and serious case reviews) and priority areas for the partners. The schedule has been drafted. Alongside the tracking of the improvement plan (process compliance and quality of practice), it is suggested that there will be thematic partnership focus on:

- The partnership response to the pandemic
- Mental health needs and services for young people
- Sufficiency of provision for looked after children
- Early Help
- Vulnerable adolescents

6. In December 2020, the Panel asked for information regarding staff turnover, by team. The table in Appendix 2 shows the turnover (rolling 12m – January 2021) in the Council as a whole, the Children and Learning Service and then the service areas / teams. Children and Learning Service turnover mirrors the overall SCC percentage (8%). Beneath that, Children's Social Care is 4% higher (12%). Social worker turnover is at 13%. Social work teams make up the majority of teams with >20% turnover (PACT, Jigsaw, Assessment Teams 1&3), alongside the contact team.

7. The Panel also requested performance information that identifies the social worker changes for children in Southampton (how many social workers a child has had). Unfortunately, it has not been possible to provide a full data report. However, the Quality Assurance Unit undertook a targeted audit of 182 children subject to child protection planning for longer than six months. The auditor reviewed how many case holding social workers the children had had since the most recent referral. They found that 103 (57%) of children had had three or less social workers (the service aspiration). The remainder had had up to eight social workers (14 children had seven or more social workers). The average number of social workers a child

	has had increased with the length of child protection plan from two social workers at six months to six social workers at 24 months. This suggests that change in social worker is contributing to lack of progress on child protection plans.
8.	Central to the response to the issues outlined in paragraphs 6 and 7 is the recruitment and retention strategy. The service is working closely with the human resources, finance and communications teams and is focused on understanding the conditions in those affected teams (through case load analysis, exit interviews and other staff feedback). The service response includes the conversion of 22 social work posts from temporary to permanent; the creation of a robust recruitment campaign; the development of the Workforce Academy; investment in management training and ongoing involvement in Step Up to Social Work and apprenticeship initiatives, alongside a new partnership with Frontline.
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Capital/Revenue</u></b>	
9.	None at this stage
<b><u>Property/Other</u></b>	
10.	None at this stage
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u></b>	
11.	S.111 Local Government Act 1972
<b><u>Other Legal Implications:</u></b>	
12.	None
<b>RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS</b>	
13.	The overall improvement plan is risk assessed.
<b>POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS</b>	
14.	<p>This developing improvement plan is an important contributor to achieving the outcomes desired for children in Southampton. The Corporate Plan 2020 sets out the following regarding the wellbeing of children in the city:</p> <p>“Working with partners to deliver the ambitions set out in the five-year Health and Wellbeing Strategy, this area looks at wellbeing across the city, with a focus on adults and children’s social care, education and public health. We work closely with partners to help safeguard vulnerable people across the city. We are focused on delivering strong customer experience across the Adults and Children &amp; Families services. We want Southampton to be a city that is recognised for its proactive approach to preventing problems and intervening early, as well being a ‘Child Friendly City’ where children and young people have great opportunities and an aspiration to achieve. We want our residents to have the information and support they need to lead safe, active, healthy lives and to be able to live independently for longer.”</p>

<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	All	
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>		
<b>Appendices</b>		
1.	Improvement Board Performance Report – January 2021	
2.	Staff turnover – Rolling 12 month analysis up to January 2021	
<b>Documents in Members' Rooms</b>		
1.	None	
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>		
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out?		<b>No</b>
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out?		<b>No</b>
<b>Other Background Documents</b>		
<b>Other Background documents available for inspection at:</b>		
<b>Title of Background Paper(s)</b>	<b>Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)</b>	
1.	Children's and Learning Improvement Plan: <a href="http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=600&amp;MId=5384&amp;Ver=4">http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=600&amp;MId=5384&amp;Ver=4</a> (item 8 Appendix 1)	