



Report to the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

Title:	Children's Peer Review and Revised Improvement Plan
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Summary

In October 2015, as part of the Improvement Programme in Children's Services, the County Council asked the LGA to undertake a Peer Review of Children's Safeguarding Services in Buckinghamshire to measure progress since the Ofsted inspection. Overall the team were impressed with the hard work and dedication from all partners to work together and improve services for children and young people in Buckinghamshire. However, whilst they identified a number of strengths and improvements made since the Ofsted inspection, as expected, they also identified a number of areas for further improvement. The emerging themes were around pace of change and the need to ensure consistency of good social work practice. A copy of the Peer Review letter is attached for information.

In November 2015, the DfE visited to review progress and commissioned some further case file auditing to be undertaken in January 2016 before making a recommendation to the Minister on any changes to the level of intervention in Buckinghamshire. The Auditors were onsite for 5 days and reviewed over 90 children's records. They submitted their report to the DfE and the DfE shared it with the County Council at the end of January. The Auditors concluded that "this is not a chaotic, unmanaged environment which is not focusing on children and where endemic, embedded and unchallenged poor or dangerous practice exists. We did not come across any children in our sample who had been left in obviously

dangerous situations and the thresholds for the various social care interventions are in the right place from the evidence that we saw. In many areas of activity, as noted, strong practice and performance exists". The Minister is now considering the findings of the audit, and other evidence (including from the DfE review in November) in making a decision about the Department's intervention and we expect to receive formal notification in the next week or so. A copy of the Auditors' report is attached for information.

The decision was taken to refresh the Improvement Plan in light of all of the recent scrutiny to ensure that it is focussed on the areas of work that require further improvement. The refreshed plan has been developed in partnership with all key stakeholders and focuses on 4 key priorities for the next 12 months (January to December 2016). The priority areas are:

- The leadership, culture, values and behaviour of the partnership ensure good outcomes for children and young people
- Best practice for children is consistent in all areas of frontline services
- Resources support good practice and improved outcomes for children and young people
- Self-knowledge, informed by listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people, drives improvements

The plan will be delivered through a variety of project boards and task and finish groups. Each priority area will have a number of project plans attached to it to ensure the necessary improvements and that the pace of change is maintained. The plan was considered by the Improvement Board on 8th February, and following a few amendments it will be published on the Council's Improvement Programme webpage and presented to Cabinet for information.