

Title	Children's Services Update
Date	27 June 2019
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Purpose of this report

1. To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update of the latest developments within Children's Services.

Report to DfE by the Improvement Adviser

2. John Coughlan (Chief Executive, Hampshire County Council), Improvement Adviser for Children's Services in Buckinghamshire has provided the DfE with the first of his progress reports on the improvement of Children's Services.
3. Whilst the report identifies that the improvement journey remains extremely challenging on a number of levels, John reports that progress is just about as well as can be expected in the circumstances. John comments that there is an extremely strong "core" from Chief Executive, to Director of Children's Services and to Assistant Director and in addition, the new heads of service are of high calibre and are settling well and getting to grips with the management group. John goes on to acknowledge that whilst it is generally too early to define positive outcomes to the partnership work, it is a general positive to note that all of the elements of the package of support, as agreed between Hampshire, Buckinghamshire and the DfE are in hand and have progressed as should be expected by this stage. A range of workshops have been completed and more are on stream. The sense from these is of positive and constructive
4. Our view is that the report accurately reflects the current position and will continue to work with Hampshire over the coming months.

Ofsted Monitoring Visit

5. Following the November 2017 inspection of Children's Social Care, Ofsted conducted their third monitoring visit on 22 and 23 May 2019. During the course of this visit, inspectors reviewed the progress made, with a particular focus on:
 - the quality of management decision making in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and the application of thresholds for intervention.
 - the quality, effectiveness and impact of assessment and planning in managing risk, and improving children's outcomes when they are first referred to the local authority.
 - the arrangements in place to respond to children missing and at risk of exploitation.

- the quality and timeliness of supervision, management oversight and decision making, social work capacity and caseloads.
6. A range of evidence was considered during the visit, including electronic case records, discussions with social workers and their managers and other supporting documentation.
7. The key findings as detailed within the monitoring visit letter are set out below:
- a) Leaders are making steady progress in improving the service to children when they are referred to children's social care.
 - b) Leaders' persistence in seeking to strengthen management oversight is beginning to deliver results. Supervision is taking place and the quality of management oversight has been strengthened.
 - c) The senior leadership team has a sound understanding of the improvements that are needed in children's services and are steadfastly determined to improve the quality of services for children.
 - d) The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) provides a mostly effective response to children's needs for early help and statutory intervention.
 - e) Considerable work has taken place to strengthen social workers and managers understanding of thresholds. This has led to more confident, timely responses for most children.
 - f) Management oversight has been strengthened since the last monitoring visit, and social work caseloads have reduced. This is beginning to provide social workers with the conditions they need to better support children and families.
 - g) Children and families benefit from a range of early help services, but the early help service is under-developed.
 - h) When children need protecting, the response is mostly effective, but the threshold for child protection intervention is not consistently applied.
 - i) Contact and referral missing officers in the MASH ensure there is effective oversight of children who go missing. Not all children who go missing are offered return home interviews and, when they are offered, they are not always completed.
 - j) Most children are visited regularly, but sometimes initial visits to children take too long and there can be gaps in visiting after initial intervention.
 - k) Most child protection enquiries are thorough and lead to appropriate decisions. The quality of recording of the child protection enquiry remains too variable, with insufficient analysis.
 - l) Managers are now more consistent in driving children's plans and supporting social workers, though leaders recognise that this work is not yet of the consistency, quality or regularity needed.
 - m) Staff spoken to during the visit, told inspectors that they enjoy working in Buckinghamshire. They report being well supported by managers and, that leaders are visible and approachable.
 - n) Newly appointed staff receive a thorough induction, which helps their transition into the service.
 - o) In a small minority of children's cases, there are delays in convening strategy discussions and not all relevant agencies are consistently engaged in strategy discussions, particularly health partners.

8. The next monitoring visit is likely to take place in Autumn 2019.

Special Educational Needs and Disability

9. Our SEND Improvement plan continues to be refined and includes contributions from a range of stakeholders. The immediate priorities are:
 - (a) Compliance with the statutory Education, Health and Care Planning 20 week timescale, annual review process and effective use of panels.
 - (b) Improving the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans and the family experience.
 - (c) Ensuring children have their needs met locally in mainstream schools where possible.
 - (d) Developing early identification and early intervention support as part of the Early Help programme.
 - (e) Developing a shared understanding of co-production.
 - (f) Improving transition arrangements as young people prepare for adulthood.
 - (g) Improving support to children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
 - (h) Upskilling the workforce across the local area to ensure children and their families benefit from skilled and knowledgeable professionals.
10. Alongside these improvement priorities, work to remodel the Specialist Teaching Service, Educational Psychology Service and SEN Team into an Integrated SEND Service has been completed and a multi-disciplinary area based model has been adopted.
11. Preparation for a potential SEND Ofsted/CQC inspection is continuing and the Self Evaluation Framework is currently being updated by stakeholders from Health, Education and Social Care. Themes from inspections of other local areas are collated and are used to inform the ongoing preparations and improvement work.