

# Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Board

## Update 20 January 2016

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This is a brief summary of the discussion and decisions from the first meeting of the Lancashire Improvement Board, which took place on 20 January 2016.

### Setting the Scene

The Improvement Board will be chaired by Tony Crane (Department for Education Improvement Advisor) and has been established to support, challenge and monitor the progress being made following Ofsted's judgement that services for children in Lancashire are inadequate.

As part of the improvement process, Tony will also report in early March to the Secretary of State and will provide them with an assessment of the council's capacity and capability to improve. This assessment will help the Secretary of State determine the position the Department for Education will take with the county council, which could range from issuing an Improvement Notice to more direct intervention including the requirement for children services to be delivered by another authority or organisation.

The terms of reference for the Improvement Board were agreed by Board members, setting out the purpose, responsibilities and scope of the Board. A copy of the terms of reference can be [found here](#).

### Learning the Lessons

The Board received a presentation by county council officers, providing background information about children's social care services in Lancashire. It also summarised the immediate actions the council has taken since the inspection and provided further analysis based on the inspection findings

Some of the key messages highlighted by council officers included that:

- Lancashire County Council is committed to improvement and wants to do what is best for children and young people.
- The council takes its responsibilities seriously but also sees children's services and the process of improving them as a responsibility shared with other agencies.
- Lancashire is large and diverse, which sometimes means that county-level performance information can mask local issues and variations
- Whilst a number of immediate actions have already have been taken, there must be a balance between these and the need to take time to fully understand the complex issues that need to be addressed
- To progress the improvement plan there will need to be a mix of short term interventions alongside sustainable cultural change
- All 'Child in Need' cases (those where it has been identified that the council should provide extra support towards a child's wellbeing or development) are being reviewed to ensure they are being managed effectively and at the right level

It was agreed that:

- The Improvement Board's February meeting will be presented with an analysis of social care processes and practice recently carried out by an external consultancy on behalf of the county council
- An offer by Lancashire Constabulary to provide extra capacity to support the review of Child in Need cases will be progressed
- All Child in Need case reviews need to be completed by 31 March 2016
- Timescales will be provided at the February meeting so that the Board is clear when vacant posts will be filled and Practice Managers are not carrying caseloads

- The county council will contact Ofsted's Head of Performance to discuss options for support in developing an effective case management system (liquid logic)

### **Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)**

A report was received that outlined the response of the LSCB to the recommendations made by Ofsted. It was agreed that the Board would explore further opportunities for the LSCB to support its work and the delivery of the Improvement Plan.

### **Performance Update**

An update on key performance measures was provided. It was agreed that when the Improvement Plan is finalised there will need to be a robust performance and quality assurance framework that sits alongside the plan and enables the Board to clearly assess progress. A draft will be brought to the February meeting.

### **Draft Improvement Plan**

The draft Improvement Plan was presented to the Board and it was explained that a version of the plan would need to be agreed by the Board and submitted to the Department for Education by 4 March 2016.

It was identified that there are a number of areas to address to ensure the plan is fit for purpose:

- It will need to be made relevant to a number of different audiences, including frontline practitioners
- At the moment the draft plan is very focussed on the role of the county council and it now needs more input and ownership from other sectors
- The draft plan is focussed around the 17 recommendations made by Ofsted, but must be developed to also capture how it will deliver sustainable, cultural change and continue to maintain and improve standards in other areas.

It was agreed that Board members would provide feedback and comment on the draft plan, with a final version to be brought to the February meeting

### **Draft Workforce Development Strategy**

The draft strategy was presented and the importance of an innovative and effective approach to workforce development was emphasised. Board members highlighted a number of areas of strength in the strategy but also some areas where they felt improvement could be made, including where Lancashire could learn from other parts of the country.

Board members also agreed that whilst the strategy was focussed on children's social care, there would be real benefit in planning activity jointly across sectors such as health and education. It was agreed that the strategy be refined and brought back to a future meeting.

For any other related information or queries about the Improvement Board please contact <a href="mailto:richard.cooke@lancashire.gov.uk">richard.cooke@lancashire.gov.uk</a>
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