

Committee:	Date:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	30 June 2014
Subject: Service Improvement Action Plan	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
<p style="text-align: center;">Summary</p> <p>This report will inform Members about the progress of the Service Improvement Action Plan. It will explain how the service has been developed to incorporate the recommendations from previous inspections, audits and more recently the Strengths-based Learning Review, which was an independent review of the Children and Families Team. The outcome of this review identified that the service was 'good' with some 'outstanding' features.</p> <p>To support the development of the service, a workshop was arranged with the Children and Families Team. This workshop looked at the services currently being offered and how these could be improved to move them all towards 'outstanding'. Some of the recommendations from this work will be incorporated within the Service Improvement Action Plan. The monitoring arrangements for this plan will be through the Children's Executive Board, Inspection Planning Meetings and City Safeguarding Sub-Group.</p> <p>The key areas for development within the plan will be the review of the quality assurance framework, which will drive forward improvements in social work practice. In addition, the following are also priority areas: improving the quality of the Independent Reviewing Service, and the participation of young people in developing the service.</p> <p>Recommendation(s)</p> <p>Members are asked to note this report.</p>	

Main Report

Background

1. The Service Improvement Action Plan has evolved since it was developed following the safeguarding and looked after children Ofsted inspection in March 2012. Initially, the plan was developed to ensure that the recommendations from previous inspections were addressed. Although the majority of the actions pertain to Children's Social Care, there are other services that are closely linked to the team and therefore have been incorporated into the plan, such as the Early Intervention and Prevention Service.

2. As opposed to being focused on post-inspection recommendations, the plan now encompasses recommendations from other sources, such as case file audits, the Strengths-based Learning Review (January 2014) and the grade descriptors from the new inspection framework. All aspects of Children's Social Care were considered, which included the Children and Families Team, Leadership and Management and the Local Authorities Designated Officer role.
3. The outcome of this review was that the service provided was 'good' with some 'outstanding' features; staff found the constructive challenge of this review helpful in identifying where improvements could be made to move the service from 'good' to 'outstanding'. Recommendations from this review have now been included in the Service Improvement Action Plan.

Current Position

4. A workshop was held with the Children and Families Team on 12 May 2014 to follow up on the themes and recommendations from the Strengths-based Learning Review. Within this workshop, staff were able to reflect on the recommendations, identifying solutions for moving from 'good' to 'outstanding'. The theme of the workshop followed the following six areas:
 - a) service user engagement
 - b) support from the organisation
 - c) work with partners
 - d) Early Intervention and Prevention
 - e) life story and direct work
 - f) case recording.
5. Solutions identified with regard to the recommendations from the review will be included in the Service Improvement Action Plan and this will be monitored monthly within the Children and Families Team Meeting. Social workers within the team will have the opportunity to take the lead on various aspects of the plan, which will contribute to their ownership. The plan will also be monitored through the Children's Executive Board, Inspection Planning Meetings and the City Safeguarding Sub-Group.

Key Areas of Development

6. Three key areas for development have been identified as being of high priority in moving the service from 'good' to 'outstanding'. The first is a review of the quality assurance framework; this framework supports and sustains good practice. The current framework needs to be reviewed as there has been some slippage in the consistency of the quality of the case work produced. The primary challenge is achieving consistent improvements in the quality of practice and outcomes for children and this can only be achieved through effective mechanisms that demonstrate measurable improvements and outcomes for children and families.
7. The second is the effectiveness and challenge from the Independent Reviewing Service. This service has been out to tender and the provider will be Reconstruct which has previously provided this service. However,

Reconstruct has recently had a change in management. The contractual arrangements clearly set out the expectations in regard to this service. Compliance will be monitored through operational and contractual meetings; if any difficulties occur, then these will be arbitrated by the Assistant Director of People.

8. The third key area concerns service user participation. Currently the Children and Families Team is working with City Gateway in the engagement of looked after children and care leavers, ascertaining their views about how they would like to participate and have a voice in the City. This project aims to create stronger connections to the City for our young people so that they can give feedback and contribute to the shaping of future services. Some activities have already taken place and in late June there will be an online consultation with some of the young people.
9. Feedback will also be obtained from Children and Families following social work intervention to ascertain the impact and outcome of social work involvement. The information obtained from this feedback will inform the effectiveness of the interventions and identify areas where further development is required to improve services.

Conclusion

10. In conclusion, the Service Improvement Action Plan clearly sets out the requirements needed to achieve an 'outstanding' service for children and families in the City. The plan will be updated on a bi-monthly basis and will be monitored and reviewed through the Children's Executive Board, Inspection Planning Meetings and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Sub-Group in the City.
11. An essential element of this plan's success is its reliance on the commitment and hard work of the Children and Families Team. To achieve this it is essential that the team has ownership of the plan and this can be assured through its continued involvement.
12. This report has identified three key areas requiring further development if the City of London is to achieve consistent 'outstanding' outcomes for children and young people. Two of the areas requiring development are being provided by commissioned services and this report highlights the expectations placed on these services through the contractual arrangements.

Appendices:

Service Improvement Action Plan
Strengths-based Learning Review

Pat Dixon
Children's Social Care Service Manager
Community and Children's Services

Telephone: 020 7332 1215
Email: pat.dixon@cityoflondon.gov.uk