

# Improvement Offer – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

## Introduction

This improvement offer is proposed by Lincolnshire County Council's (LCC) Director of Children Services in the role as Practice Leader for Rotherham Children's Social Care Services.

The Children's Social Care Commissioner Malcolm Newsam's report of February 2016 highlights significant improvements in Rotherham's children's social care services since the Ofsted inspections in September 2014. However, there remain concerns that the progress achieved remains fragile. The report states that the lack of capacity in the Council to quickly resolve the longstanding issues in respect of workforce planning and financial management will continue to hinder progress if not addressed with more urgency.

The Children's Social Care Commissioner has set out key tests in order for the Council to take back its executive powers and continue to improve services for vulnerable children and young people, these are:

- **Well-functioning corporate services**
- **Stable and capable leadership**
- **Continued improvement in the quality and effectiveness of practice**
- **Strong and supportive partnerships**
- **Robust financial management**
- **A compelling strategy for the workforce**
- **Effective performance information and quality assurance**

After extensive discussion with the Director of Children and Family Services (DCS) in Rotherham, this improvement offer makes recommendations on how Lincolnshire Children Services can support continued improvement in many of the above areas through its role as practice leader.

## 1. Robust financial management

The DCS has recently completed a medium term financial strategy for the service which seeks investment to enable service transformation with an expected longer term cost reductions in as alternative approaches to safeguarding services and a reduced reliance on agency staff is realised. However, it is understood that the service will continue to struggle to achieve financial balance in 2016/17 and 2017/8, unless the requested investment is provided. While the Council has endeavoured to protect children's services and has increased the budget significantly for the forthcoming year, the amount allocated for children's social care remains circa £5 million below the expenditure forecast for 2016/17 and with demographic pressures, the budget gap is estimated to be in the region of £7.5m. As the majority of this cost pressure is attributable to placements of looked after children and an over reliance on agency staff, this will not be subject to quick and painless remedy. It is understood that there has been an agreement to review the budget settlement, but it is important that the Council is assured that all areas are considered and robustly assessed, to see if spend can be reduced through transformation across all aspects of Children's Services.

Lincolnshire recommends the following additional support and challenge:

- A critical analysis of the medium term financial strategy with recommendations and comment. This will enable the Council and Commissioners to have third party assurance that the assumptions made in the strategy are realistic and able to be realised.

- An analysis of 2016/17 spend and 2017/18 budget with recommendations for potential service transformation to enable budget reductions across all areas. The mechanism to achieve this will be through a fundamental budget review of all budgets. This will enable the Council and Commissioners to have third party assurance that all possible options for reduced spend have been explored to enable the Council (for non-social care areas) and the Commissioners (for social care areas) to make informed decisions.

The DCS has further identified that commissioning is in its infancy at Rotherham and suggests that the current approach to commissioning placements for looked after children demonstrates this. The DCS has requested additional support to develop a robust sufficiency plan for looked after children placements, which will inform the medium and longer term financial strategy. There is an expectation that a robust sufficiency strategy for looked after children will result in medium term budget savings. Further it will ensure high quality placements for looked after children and facilitate a mature and sustainable market place which is ready to respond to the changing needs of Children Services. Lincolnshire can assist in providing critical challenge to the Council's sufficiency strategy and review current commissioning arrangements to achieve greater value for money.

In addition, the DCS has requested that the Practice Leader and associated Lincolnshire staff review the current commissioning arrangements for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and make recommendations on service development in line with the CAMHS Transformation plan.

### ***Capacity required***

It is recommended that, in addition to the one day a week capacity through the Practice Leader, an initial **20 days** of further capacity through LCC commissioning staff is required. This would include support to:

- Review the sufficiency strategy – this will include considering the arrangements for residential and other care options for children in care as well as accommodation options for care leavers.
- Provide critical challenge of the medium term financial strategy – this will include undertaking a fundamental budget review approach across all budgets, making recommendations for service transformation or service and cost reduction.
- Advice on how to improve market management of the sector to support the development of an effective sufficiency strategy.
- Review of CAMHS with recommendations for service transformation.

The Lead LCC Officer for this element of the improvement work is Andrew McLean – Head of Service Commissioning.

[Andrew.mclean@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.mclean@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

### **Key deliverables**

- *Comprehensive sufficiency strategy*
- *Comprehensive financial strategy which has 3 year budget requirements clearly outlined*
- *Recommendations for budget reductions and cost apportionment / service transformation/ decommissioning proposed*
- *Recommendations for service transformation of CAMHS*

## 2. Continued improvements in the quality and effectiveness of practice

### 2a – Effectiveness of services for looked after children and care leavers

The Ofsted report in 2014 identified that the service needed to ensure that all available routes to permanence for children and young people are maximised, that children's progress towards permanency is accelerated by permanency being considered early enough and that the swift initiation of legal processes, good assessments and effective oversight of all children in need of legal protection was embedded. It is clear that support is needed on improving quality of practice and on achieving permanence for children in care promptly. The low number of special guardianship orders is an area in need of challenge as is the higher than expected number of children in residential care.

The DCS has requested some additional capacity to support the improvement journey for looked after children and care leavers and has confirmed that in his opinion this is the priority area of focus.

Lincolnshire recommends the following additional support and challenge:

- Initial diagnosis of services for looked after children and care leavers through a peer review approach, making recommendations for service improvement – this would include identification of key issues impacting on drift in longer term CLA cases and recommendations for addressing this.
- Initial diagnosis of Independent reviewing service through a peer review approach, making recommendations for service improvement and staff development – this would include identification of key issues impacting on the quality assurance mechanisms intended to safeguard looked after children.
- Capacity to support the delivery of the recommendations of the above peer reviews
- Analysis of adoption arrangements with recommendations to improve performance regarding the adoption scorecard.
- Analysis of the fostering service with recommendations to drive forward service improvement and capacity to assist in the delivery of recommendations
- Mentoring and coaching to key managers.
- Additional workforce development activity for other key managers as identified through the peer review.

#### ***Capacity required***

It is recommended that, in addition to the one day a week capacity through the Practice Leader, a further **30 days** capacity is required as this is a priority areas of focus and considered to be the area at greatest risk of an inadequate judgement by Ofsted.

The Lead LCC Officers for this element of the improvement work is Tara Jones and Yvonne Shearwood – Heads of Service and Janice Spencer – Assistant Director.

[Tara.jones@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Tara.jones@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Yvonne.shearwood@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Yvonne.shearwood@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Janice.spencer@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Janice.spencer@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Damian.elcock@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Damian.elcock@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

## Key deliverables

- *Confident that IRO service is compliant with the handbook*
- *Development of key managers*
- *Improved business processes to support permanence*
- *Improved quality of assessment and speedier permanence decisions*

## **2b – Effectiveness of services for young people who are at risk of becoming looked after**

Although there has been considerable improvement in services for young people at risk of child sexual exploitation, Rotherham are experiencing an increase in the numbers of young people becoming looked after. The medium term financial strategy confirms that there is an urgent need to develop services to support those who are on the cusp of care and likely to need to become looked after. Rotherham have signalled their intent to develop an innovative programme which provides young people with the stability, skills and support they need to successfully manage their transition to adulthood and to avoid care.

Lincolnshire recommends the following additional support and challenge:

- Analysis to understand the need of young people who are at risk of becoming looked after.
- Capacity to support the design of cusp of care services.
- Development of a business plan to outline a dedicated service for Rotherham which can reduce the need for young people to become looked after.
- Capacity to design a workforce development strategy to enable the workforce to have the skills required to make a difference to the lives of a young person.

### ***Capacity required***

It is recommended that, in addition to the one day a week capacity through the Practice Leader, a further **12 days** capacity is required as this is a priority areas of focus and considered to be the area at greatest risk of an inadequate judgement by Ofsted.

The Lead LCC Officers for this element of the improvement work is Roz Cordy supported by Cornelia Andrecut and Jo Kavanagh – Heads of Service.

[Roz.cordy@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Roz.cordy@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Cornelia.andrecut@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Cornelia.andrecut@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Jo.kavanagh@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jo.kavanagh@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

## Key deliverables

- *Business plan for service to support young people in the edge of care*

## **2c – Effectiveness of services for children with special educational needs and disability**

All local authorities will be subject to a multi-agency inspection to evaluate the effectiveness of services in identifying and supporting children with special educational needs. From late spring in 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission will inspect local areas to see how they are fulfilling their responsibilities to children and young people

who really do need, and are often dependent upon, local public services. These are the services they receive from their nurseries, schools and colleges and from the specialist therapists and other professionals in educational, health and early help and social care services. These inspections are about how the whole local area meets the needs of some of the most vulnerable children and young people.

Inspectors will want to see evidence that children and young people are progressing, whether to their next stage of education or employment. The new inspection is not just about holding local areas to account; crucially it's also about helping the area to develop and improve.

The DCS has requested some additional capacity to assure him that SEND services, children with disability services and arrangements for transition to adulthood would be evaluated well by Ofsted and CQC. Lincolnshire has an experienced Head of Service who has recently undertaken training by Ofsted to enable them to inspect on this framework.

Lincolnshire recommends the following additional support and challenge:

- Initial diagnosis of services for SEND, children with disability services and arrangements for transition to adulthood through a peer review approach, making recommendations for service improvement – this would include identification of key issues impacting on transition.
- The peer review will make recommendations for service improvement – this will include considering the quality of services for children with a disability and transition for young people 14-25 and their offer across children's and adults social care.

### **Capacity required**

It is recommended that, in addition to the one day a week capacity through the Practice Leader, further **10 days** capacity through Lincolnshire's Head of Services and other staff is provided as outlined above.

The Lead LCC Officer for this element of the improvement work is Sheridan Dodsworth – Head of Service.

[Sheridan.dodsworth@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Sheridan.dodsworth@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

### **Key deliverables**

- *Narrative on compliance with the Ofsted framework for SEND*

### **3. A compelling strategy for the workforce**

The Children's Social Care Commissioner Report of February 2016, highlights the lack of capacity in the Council to quickly resolve the longstanding issues in respect of workforce planning. The newly appointed Chief Executive supports this analysis, although it is not understood if a comprehensive workforce analysis and development plan has been compiled. The report recommends that the Council needs a strategy to deliver a settled structure for children's social care, more permanent social care staff in post, nearing national averages, and a return to only using interim staff as a means of upskilling or supplementing, when necessary, the permanent staffing establishment. Comprehensive professional development for staff at all levels supporting effective practice and staff retention is a priority.

The Practice Leader has advised that support for workforce development has already been commissioned and that additional support is not required.

**This will be kept under review through the improvement board.**

#### **4. Effective performance information and quality assurance**

Effective performance information and quality assurance is essential to facilitate a culture of accountability which measures impact of services and drives practice improvement. The Children's Social Care Commissioner report of February 2016 notes that data has been used very effectively to monitor and drive better performance but to improve practice further there needs to be a greater emphasis on the outcomes being achieved and a clearer understanding of the quality of practice with children and young people. This in turn will embed a culture of accountability which will improve practice. Beyond auditing is considered to be a positive development and the Improvement Board look forward to seeing its impact, although it is acknowledged that management oversight and reflective supervision needs to be strengthened across the service.

Performance assurance systems in Lincolnshire are highly effective and learning from all assurance mechanisms promotes improvement. Case auditing arrangements drive practice with all managers undertaking audits which further reinforce the culture of accountability. Understanding case management including the way cases flow through the system, the quality assurance checks to ensure consistency of practice and effective, reflective supervision with robust management oversight is essential to achieve a good "Children Service" and additional capacity in this area from Lincolnshire's staff will genuinely assist in the development of good solid social work practice.

Lincolnshire recommends the following additional support and challenge:

- Strategic review of performance assurance framework with recommendations for improvement to enable a holistic approach to performance assurance - this would include considering the "beyond auditing" framework.
- Analysis of annex A to develop hypotheses of case management arrangements in Rotherham.
- To undertake a deep dive of cases identified through annex A, complementing the current auditing programme, to "prove" or "disprove" the hypothesis.
- To develop a set of recommendations to improve case management arrangements including providing coaching and mentoring to managers to assist in driving practice.

It is further recognised that a strong partnership with the Council's legal services is essential to enable the delivery of effective performance, practice and quality assurance. It has been requested by the Chief Executive that Lincolnshire's child care legal team undertake a peer review of Rotherham's child care legal services. The scope is to be agreed, but it is anticipated that two LCC staff will undertake a peer review over 3 days to confirm effectiveness of practice, value for money and the effectiveness of the partnership between the service and legal.

#### ***Capacity Required***

It is difficult to make clear recommendations on capacity needed for this aspect of work as it will be dependent on the findings of the analysis and deep drive case auditing, However, it is proposed that, in addition to the one day a week capacity through the Practice Leader, further capacity to assist in the analysis of case management and deep dive audit will require **circa 50 days**. The legal peer review will be within this capacity.

However this will be kept under review and once diagnosis and analysis is complete; this whole proposal for an improvement offer will be reviewed and refined.

The Lead LCC Officers for this element of the improvement work is Stuart Carlton, supported by Roz Cordy, Cornelia Andrecut and Jo Kavanagh – Heads of Service.

The legal peer review will be completed by Toni Geraghty and Rebecca Andrews.

[Stuart.carlton@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Stuart.carlton@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Roz.cordy@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Roz.cordy@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Cornelia.andrecut@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Cornelia.andrecut@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Jo.kavanagh@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jo.kavanagh@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Toni.geraghty@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Toni.geraghty@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

[Rebecca.andrews@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Rebecca.andrews@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

### Key deliverables

- Recommendations to improve case management arrangements.
- Peer review of legal services with recommendations to strengthen effectiveness of practice, value for money and effective relationships between children services and legal.

## 5. Strong and supportive partnerships

There has been considerable progress in partnership working through better leadership, increased collaboration and improved working practices. Partners have identified two priorities; Embedding Early Help and the development of a well-performing workforce across the partnership. Over the next six months, partners need to deliver against these priorities. The Commissioners will monitor and support this work assist the partners to meet its objectives.

This will be part of the agreed work plan for the Lincolnshire DCS and LM through the Commissioner role. However, it is understood that the RSCB have also requested additional support in the form of a peer review.

Lincolnshire's LSCB would be able to offer the following:

- 3 day peer review – subject to the scope of the request from RSCB, the number of days needed would need to reflect the engagement of partners including health and police partnership arrangements.
- peer review to assess partner commitment to implementing early help.

### **Capacity Required**

This will need to be confirmed after discussion with the chair of the RSCB, but it is estimated that **20 days** would be required to ensure a wide engagement of partners to contribute to the review and participation in the review.

This needs to be agreed with the Chair of the RSCB.

The Lead RSCB Officer for this element of the improvement work is Andy Morris, LSCB Business Manager supported by Chris Cook, Chair of the LSCB, Toni Geraghty, Legal Advisor, Jade Sullivan – LSCB Policy Officer and others as the scope is developed.

[Andrew.morris@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.morris@lincolnshire.gov.uk) (key contact)

## Key Deliverables

- TBC

## Summary

The next few months will be a critical time in terms of the future direction of children's services in Rotherham and in demonstrating that the key tasks as outlined by the Children's Commissioner in his report of February 2016 have been met. It is therefore recommended that this work programme is delivered concurrently to enable the improvement offer to be delivered over the next 3 months (May - July 2016).