

For General Release

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People's Sub-Committee 27 November 2018
SUBJECT:	Improvement Plan update
LEAD OFFICER:	Eleni Ioannides, Interim Executive Director, Children, Families and Education Department
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT Croydon Corporate plan 2015-18 The recommendations address the following Corporate Plan priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To help families be healthy and resilient and able to maximise their life chances and independence• To create a place where people feel safe and are safe	
AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON & WHY ARE WE DOING THIS: The Independence and Liveability Strategies 2015-18 set out how the Council will achieve the commitments made in the administration's 'Ambitious for Croydon' election manifesto in respect of independence and liveability.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT £10.9m has been allocated to base budgets in 2018-19 to support the drive to improve children's services.	
FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO. This is not a key decision.	
1. RECOMMENDATIONS 1.1 Note the refreshed Children's Improvement Plan 2018/19 which has a sharpened focus on a smaller number of improvement priorities 1.2 Note the overview of management posts across early help and children's social care 1.3 Note the actions proposed in the Improvement Plan to strengthen management oversight and grip	

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 One year into the improvement journey the children's improvement plan has been refreshed to support the drive to increase the pace of improvement and to respond to the feedback from Ofsted monitoring visits that more attention needs to be paid to the consistency and quality of day to day practice at all levels.
- 2.2 The internal governance arrangements have also been refreshed in line with the improvement plan. Overseen by the Executive Director Children, Families and Education the programme approach will ensure that progress is gripped and that support from across the Council and its partners directly informs the improvement plan.
- 2.3 Strengthening management oversight and grip is a key improvement priority. The improvement plan sets out the details of a more targeted approach to work with the cohort of team and service managers across early help and children's social care. The most recent monitoring visit gave some encouraging feedback on the impact of this work, although there is still much more to do to achieve quality alongside consistency.

3. CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2018/19

- 3.1 The Children's Improvement Plan has been reviewed to sharpen the focus on the right priorities at increased pace. This has resulted in a simpler, shorter document that is made of four distinct workplans.
- 3.2 The plan outlines the actions to be taken in 2018/19 to address the weaknesses identified by Ofsted in 2017 and in subsequent monitoring visits. The main changes between the old and new plans are:
 - Fewer priorities focus on the most important areas
 - The plan is divided into new work streams:
 - Management & Practice; covering actions to improve management grip and the quality and consistency of social work practice
 - Workforce; covering actions to recruit and retain staff and learning and development activity
 - Partnerships; covering actions to develop a partnership early help offer, improve partnership working and strengthen the local safeguarding board
 - Platforms; covering actions relating to corporate support services including finance, performance, children's recording systems, commissioning and business (administrative) support

- A work plan to deliver the priority to create a culture of shared ownership and social work values will be developed and overseen by the Staff Reference Group.
- New programme reporting arrangements aligned to our social work practice model, strengthening families, which will focus on answering the following four questions;
 - What's working well? (e.g. key achievements or improvements)
 - How do we know? (evidence of impact)
 - What are we worried about? (e.g. risks, issues and underperformance)
 - What needs to happen, and by when? (e.g. mitigating or remedial actions)

3.3 New internal governance arrangements across the Council have been agreed to support this next phase of Croydon's improvement journey aligned to the new Improvement Plan's structure, including:

- A monthly programme board chaired by the Executive Director Children, Families and Education to monitor and challenge progress across all work streams and ensure there is sufficient corporate support, focus and resource to drive improvement activity and deliver the plan. This will report directly to the Improvement Board.
- A monthly task group for each work stream, chaired by the relevant senior responsible officers to:
 - Hold lead officers to account for delivery of actions through oversight and challenge
 - Report up to the Children's Improvement Programme Board
 - Assess the impact of actions
 - Drive forward underlying action planning and task and finish group activity

3.4 The Children's Safeguarding Board will continue oversee the development of the early help offer with additional internal assurance from the Partnerships work stream Task Group to ensure that all the actions in the plan are on track for delivery.

3.5 These governance arrangements will be kept under review over the next 3-6 months to ensure they are effective in leading change at increased pace required.

4. MANAGERS IN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND EARLY HELP

- 4.1 The distribution of locum and permanent managers across the service is set out in table 1 below, along with the overview of those that have joined since the SIF inspection in June 2017. The table includes 56 team managers, 13 service managers 1 assistant team manager, 6 heads of service and 1 assistant director.
- 4.2 As can be seen from the table around two thirds of managers currently in post were appointed prior to the single inspection in June 2017. As at the end of October 2018 around two thirds of all managers were permanent appointments.

Service	Number of managers	Locum	Salaried	In post prior to 1/9/17	Joined since 1/9/17
Adolescent services	10	1	9	6	4
Care planning	19	6	13	9	10
Children with disabilities	7	4	3	4	3
Corporate parenting	22	7	15	17	5
Early Help	7	1	6	6	1
SPOC and assessments	12	6	6	8	4
TOTAL	77	25	52	50	27

Table 1

- 4.3 Corporate support for children's services from HR is continuing to focus on tackling underperformance. Over the past year 4 managers from the corporate parenting, children with disabilities and care planning services have left the service following management action.

5. STRENGTHENING MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT AND GRIP

- 5.1 The need to strengthen management oversight and ensure robust quality assurance and performance management was one of the recommendations in the single inspection in July 2017, and has continued to be an area identified by Ofsted as needing more improvement.
- 5.2 The July Ofsted monitoring visit reported that management oversight of practice was too variable. While there had been an increase in the frequency of supervision, the quality was inconsistent and not having an impact on the quality of services provided to children and families. This was a consistent

theme from the original inspection in July 2017 and in each of the monitoring visits.

- 5.3 In response, a co-ordinated approach to improving management oversight was initiated. As an immediate action all team and service managers are required to attend one of three seminars over August led by the Executive Director and Director of Early Help and Children's Social care. These provided a face to face opportunity to reaffirm the expectations of all managers as set out in the managers' practice standards.
- 5.4 The seminars also created the space for direct and honest conversations with these key staff to identify what is getting in the way of all managers working at the level of the best, what the offer of support to staff will be so they can consistently achieve these standards and clarify the consequences of non-compliance. One of the practical outcomes is a series of short training sessions for managers on appraisals, managing performance and managing sickness.
- 5.5 This more granular detail of where improvements are needed was then anchored in the refreshed children's improvement plan. The first section focuses on strengthening management grip at all levels, including:
- Setting the standards: for practitioners and managers to improve compliance and recording and embed Strengthening Families
 - Supervision: improving the quality, frequency and impact of supervision
 - Using data to drive performance: ensuring better oversight of pre-proceedings and permanence planning to reduce drift and delay
 - Quality assurance: using audit activity, child protection chairs' and independent reviewing officers' challenge to assess and improve quality and compliance
- 5.6 Improving practice through strengthening management is also one of the workstreams with Croydon's peer support partner, Camden. The approach has been to provide leadership and management development sessions to Head of Service and their direct reports, using a systemic approach that reflects the Strengthening Families practice model being applied to working with families. The focus has been on their roles as leaders and managers in bringing about changes within families through their management of staff. All service leads and their teams have either commenced the training or have it booked in when newly-appointed permanent managers have taken up post. The evaluations of the support have been positive, recognising that this is developmental work with leaders that will take time to impact directly on practice.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 A communication and engagement plan has been developed to underpin the improvement activity, with the following objectives:
1. To communicate how we are improving children's services in Croydon over the next two years
 2. To inform our staff, stakeholders and partners about our improvement plan – progress, key decisions, activities and dates
 3. To encourage staff, children and partners that they are a vital part of the journey and the solution and to create confidence in them that we can run an effective and safe service – we are people focused.
 4. To help create the environment for effective culture change through communication and engagement
 5. To help in the recruitment and retention of key children's service staff – by showcasing Croydon as a great place to work through creating a strong 'We are Croydon' brand
- 6.2 A Council staff reference group has been established and feeds into the improvement board through the chair and vice chair of the group, two social workers, who sit on the board bringing practitioners' perspectives. Our line of sight leaflet also outlines a range of ways in which leadership is kept in touch with progress.
- 6.3 Consultation and engagement with children and young people is central to social work practice and service improvement. Croydon has a range of mechanisms to engage and consult with children, young and their families. This includes the Youth Engagement Strategy which sets out a number of initiatives to ensure that children and young people have a voice, and the Children in Care Council.
- 6.4 Listening and responding to the experiences, wishes and feelings of children and young people is one of the priorities of the improvement plan and will be central to the improvement programme. The plan includes actions to strengthen how the views and experiences of children, young people and their families influence service design. This feedback will also help monitor the impact of improvement activity.

7. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The 2018/19 budget includes growth of £10.2m in the People (Children's base budget) and £0.7m in Resources (Business Support base budget) to ensure the staffing structure and budget support both the level of demand being experienced and also the areas of focus for improvement.

7.2 The Medium Term Financial Strategy approved at Cabinet in September 2018 assumes a further investment in Children's Social care of £7m in 2019/20 to fund the continued growth in demand and complexity of need.

7.3 Approved by Lisa Taylor, Director of Finance, Investment and Risk

8. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

8.1 The Solicitor to the Council comments that there are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

8.2 Approved by: Doutimi Aseh, Head of Social Care & Education Law for and on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

9.1 It is recognised that in order to improve outcomes for children in Croydon we need to attract and retain a skilled and committed workforce with manageable workloads and good management oversight. This is a key priority outlined in the Children's Improvement Plan 2018/19 (see priority 4) and the actions that we will take to ensure this happens are set out under the Workforce work stream of the plan.

9.2 Work is continuing to utilise all available options to maintain the successful recruitment of permanent staffing and plan for turnover of both permanent and locum staff. This is showing signs of progress but remains challenging and we continue to use high levels of locums. The investment in newly qualified social workers and the revision of the learning and development offer for staff aligns to workforce planning and development priorities for the service

9.3 Approved by Sue Moorman, Director of Human Resources

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

10.1 The Children's Improvement Plan aims to ensure that all children and young people in Croydon who require it benefit from high quality social work, regardless of disability, gender, religion, race or sexual orientation. An Equality Analysis on the plan will be undertaken by 1 December 2018 to consider any disproportionate impact on people sharing one or more protected characteristics. For underlying actions within the plan that relate to service design or other structural changes (e.g. staffing changes), individual equality assessments will be undertaken in line with council-wide procedures.

10.2 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.

10.3 Croydon has a diverse population of children and young people. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 57%, compared with 30% in the country as a whole. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language across primary schools is 44% (the national average is 18%).

10.4 Social workers' planning and recording in relation to inequalities is inconsistent, which can result in plans for children's care that do not reflect their needs. The improvement plan addresses the additional work which needs to be done to ensure that children's diversity and identity needs are accurately and consistently identified, inform assessment and so met through their care plans.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

There are no direct implications contained in this report.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

There are no direct implications contained in this report.

13. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

N/A

16. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

N/A

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

APPENDICES: Appendix 1 Croydon Children's Improvement Plan
November 2018