



CABINET – 15TH SEPTEMBER 2017

**FUNDING REQUIREMENTS TO DELIVER THE OFSTED
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES**

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise members of the work which has been undertaken in response to the Ofsted inspection under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) which took place in December 2016, and to seek the Cabinet's approval for the allocation of additional resources to deliver improvements.
2. In response to the Ofsted inspection, the Children and Family Services department has developed the 'Continuous Improvement Plan'. This is attached as Appendix B to this report, with the summary 'Plan on a Page' at Appendix A.

Recommendations

3. The Cabinet is recommended to approve the growth bid for Children and Family Services for £2.5m for the 2018/19 financial year.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The additional funding is required in order to deliver the 17 key Ofsted recommendations for improvements to Children and Family Services, to ensure that services for vulnerable children and families are consistently of a good standard. The funding includes £0.5m already agreed for the service.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. The Children and Family Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider this report at its meeting on 11th September 2017 and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. The Ofsted Single Inspection Framework: *Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers* sets out the agenda for inspections of local authority children's services.

7. On 10th March 2017, the Cabinet approved an Action Plan which responded to the recommendations in the Ofsted Report and set out proposals for the future development and improvement of services to children and families. (The Action Plan, now titled the 'Ofsted Continuous Improvement Plan' is attached to this report).
8. On 22 February 2017, the County Council agreed the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2017/18-2020/21 (MTFS) which included £0.5 million growth monies for the Children and Family Services Department and a savings target over this period of £4m.

Resource Implications

9. In 2017/18 the pressure on the overall children's social care budget has continued with circa 8% per annum increases in numbers of children coming into care. At present an overall overspend is expected, due to the rise in placement costs and the part-year cost of the Continuous Improvement Plan.
10. The proposals in the Continuous Improvement Plan require investment of £2million. Growth of £0.5m was built into the 2017/18 budget, agreed by the Council in February 2017, meaning that further net investment of £2.0m is now required. This cannot be found from the existing budget.
11. The additional funding will address capacity issues, including the recruitment of 37 extra children's social care staff, and help address significant legal cost pressures which arise from the increased number of care proceedings, including the establishment of 2 additional solicitors.
12. Medium term financial sustainability will also enable performance issues to be addressed within the department. Experience from elsewhere shows that there are significant financial risks from not investing. Please see the detail provided in Part B of this report below.
13. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

14. A copy of this report will be circulated to all members of the Council under the Members News in Brief Service.

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PART B

Background

15. In December 2016 Leicestershire Children and Family Services were inspected by Ofsted under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF). The resulting Ofsted report outlined key areas of strength and identified a number of areas requiring improvement, contained within 17 recommendations, and gave an overall judgement of *Requires improvement to be good*.
16. The 17 recommendations form the basis of the Continuous Improvement Plan. This and the associated 'Plan on a Page' (Road to Excellence) outline how the Local Authority will develop services for vulnerable children and families in Leicestershire to be consistently good or outstanding. The service has concentrated on two key drivers -
 - Consistent management oversight
 - Robust practice that focuses on improved outcomes for children and families.
17. In addition to robustly reviewing existing resources to achieve progress against the Ofsted Continuous Improvement Plan, additional resources have been identified as being required to address key operational shortfalls. For example, at the end of July 2017 there were 2800 open cases across Children's Social Care, including 533 children in care and 521 children who were the subject of child protection plans. This represents a significant increase over the last 12 months which, along with a rise in the number of care proceedings, has placed significant pressure upon workloads. This is in line with national trends.
18. Our continuous improvement plan outlines a range of objectives under each strategic aim. These are reviewed by the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care (CSC) and the extended senior management team on a monthly basis. Reviews track the progress of planned actions and desired results, as well as helping to shape work streams. Appendix B presents progress to date of each objective under each strategic aim and planned future actions.
19. Highlights of progress taken from Appendix B are:
 - a. The launch of CSC's quality assurance framework 'Growing Quality' and the aligned publication of clear practice and management standards (*addresses Ofsted recommendations 2 and 5 specifically but covers all regarding standards and consistency*).
 - b. Practice standards have been developed for key areas to set quality standards and to monitor and measure progress in providing consistently good services. For example, practice standards for assessments have been developed and introduced in First Response (the first point of contact for referrals to children's services). An audit against these standards has been undertaken and learning from the audit shared with the service to help further improve quality and performance (*addresses Ofsted recommendations 1-17*).

- c. The remodelling of First Response and supporting structures, performance management and oversight, alongside targeted learning and development for First Response staff to secure a strong front door (*addresses Ofsted recommendations 1, 4 and 6*).
- d. The review of several policies, processes, panels and team models to ensure case management and outcomes are consistently Good (*addresses Ofsted recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16*).
- e. Making best use of funding secured through the growth bid so that the workforce is able to learn, develop and improve whilst holding manageable caseloads (*addresses Ofsted recommendations 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17*).
- f. Establishment of an increased number of Personal Assistants for Children in Care. This, along with the establishment of a dedicated Leaving Care (16 plus) service will improve access to support for care leavers and the quality of Pathway planning (*addresses Ofsted recommendations 3 and 12*).
- g. Focus on permanence planning and the role of the Permanence Panel to strengthen performance in this area. A practice summit has been held for managers to ensure a strong understanding and commitment to driving this forward. The service campaign for 2017/18 is permanence planning (*addresses Ofsted recommendation 7*).
- h. The first annual Leicestershire Social Work conference was held in June. This had a clear focus on quality practice and what makes a difference (*addresses all Ofsted recommendations but specifically 17*).
- i. A 'Pride in Practice' conference for practitioners across the Children and Family Directorate to share good practice is planned for November 2017 (*addresses all Ofsted recommendation by focusing on quality practice*).
- j. Work is ongoing with Learning and Development colleagues and First Line managers in Children's Social Care to develop a learning programme for managers (*addresses Ofsted recommendation 17*).
- k. Revising and launching a range of different support mechanisms for children, families and carers involved in fostering and adoption (*addresses Ofsted recommendations 11 and 13*).
- l. The refinement of performance management information and use of regular performance management meetings to establish a strong performance management culture. Progress in all areas is monitored, reviewed, challenged and celebrated (*addresses Ofsted recommendation 1*).

- m. Process to strengthen the completion of Return Interviews for young people who had run away or been missing, and improved multi-agency working to share intelligence and determine the plan of work to prevent further episodes of the young person going missing is now embedded and showing improved performance (*addresses Ofsted recommendation 9*).
- n. Review has taken place of support provided to children with a disability to strengthen work with Children in Need. Support from Early Help is also being strengthened for those who do not require social work intervention in progress (*addresses Ofsted recommendation 10*).

Proposals

- 20. The full details and rationale for the investment are outlined in Appendix C. They fall into the broad areas to address the following:
 - Achieving manageable caseloads
 - Providing sufficient management oversight
 - Meeting statutory requirements
 - Ensuring good standards of safe practice
 - Supporting staff to develop professionally
 - Meeting legal cost pressures
 - Promoting the development of inter-agency partnership working.
- 21. The proposed level of investment represents that needed for a sufficient number of Social Workers and Personal Assistants (Care Leavers) to manage workloads effectively, and for the additional managerial capacity necessary in order to maintain the required supervisory balance of manager to worker. Other teams require additional posts to achieve statutory requirements, for example increasing the number of Personal Assistants for care leavers and resources for the post-adoption support offer.
- 22. Additional capacity is required to ensure responsibilities for adequately supporting newly qualified social workers are met as well as the accreditation and professional development of staff.
- 23. It is therefore proposed that across Children's Social Care an additional 37 posts are established (details are given in Appendix C). In addition 2 new solicitor posts will be created within the Chief Executive's Department to address the increased workload in legal services relating to children and families services.

Conclusion

- 24. The Council has always aspired to provide the highest quality service to children and families in order to achieve the best possible outcomes particularly to those in greatest need. The Ofsted SIF Inspection highlighted

some areas where the Local Authority is not operating in a manner which is conducive to achieving this and that it needs to perform better.

25. Allocation of the additional funding to Children and Family Services as proposed in this report will enable the necessary investment to meet the Continuous Improvement Plan, respond to Ofsted's recommendations and enable the Authority to achieve its overall aspirations for Children and Family Services.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet, 10 March 2017 'Ofsted Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers' and minutes of that meeting

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&Mid=4859&Ver=4>

Report to the County Council, 22 February 2017 'Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 - 2020/21' and minutes of that meeting

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&Mid=4433>

Appendices

Appendix A – A Plan on a Page: Continuous Improvement plan 2017-2020

Appendix B – Ofsted Continuous Improvement Action Plan 2017-2020

Appendix C – Rational for the provision of additional resources in Children and Family Services in order to meet the requirements of the OFSTED Continuous Improvement Plan

Equality and Human Rights Implications

26. The service works with some of the most vulnerable children, young people and families in the County. The resources outlined within this report and attached appendix will place the Local Authority in a strong position to provide consistently good services to vulnerable children and families.