Safeguarding and Improvement Update

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide Scrutiny an update on progress in the delivery of the Children’s Improvement Plan, which has replaced the Safeguarding Improvement Plan following the Ofsted report in May. The report is set out using the themes from the Improvement Plan.

2.0 Issues for Scrutiny

2.1 To consider progress against the Children’s Improvement Plan and seek assurances on any specific topics for the next Scrutiny Board.

3.0 Background

3.1 LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

3.2 The Council received the draft Statuary Direction Notice on 28 August. The notice is a legal document in which the Department for Education issues a series of instructions which the Council is bound to deliver against. The notice does not contain any unexpected issues and the final version will be circulated to Board members as soon as it is available.

3.3 Ofsted’s next diagnostic visit, focussing on social care in the West of Cumbria, will take place on 5th/6th October slightly later than originally planned. The subsequent diagnostic in November will consider the work of the IRO service and further diagnostics are likely to be theme based.

3.4 Work has continued to progress the restructure of Children’s Services both at a leadership level and within the area of Children and Families. All of the new Senior Managers assumed their new responsibilities on 7th September.

3.5 North District, Carlisle and Eden – Lynn Berryman, previously senior manager for Children Looked after

3.6 South District – Barrow and South Lakes - Liz Curtis, previously acting up as senior manager for Children in Need
3.7 West District – Allerdale and Copeland - Lesley Sanczuk, previously Principal Social Worker (PSW)

3.8 Fostering, Adoption. Residential and Edge of Care – Deborah Evans previously senior manager for child protection.

3.9 All internal interviews for permanent posts have been conducted with due rigour and the involvement of young people.

3.10 Three experienced interims are now be supporting our improvement journey and will be in post for next six months. Terry Irvine is leading on the development of the Safeguarding Hub, Fran Arnold is focussing on achieving permanence for children looked after and Euston Copeland will pick up some of the PSW function and focus on practice improvement with particular emphasis on the Public Law Outline (pre proceedings) and care proceedings.

3.11 Planning for the Local Government Association Peer Review scheduled to take place from 7th – 10th December 2015 are now well underway. The Reviewing Team has been confirmed and we are very pleased that the lead reviewer will be Pete Dwyer, Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service, North Yorkshire County Council. The review which will include multi-agency audits and conversations with partners agencies will give us all some rich information on the progress being made for vulnerable children in Cumbria.

3.12 The development of Early Help Services continues with two specific work streams underway. The transition of the Targeted Youth Work Reducing Risk Taking Behaviour contract into an 11-19 Early Help Service is on target to be in place by 1 October 2015. A six month service development plan is in place pending reshaping for April 2016. The reshaping encompasses the second work stream which is bringing together components of Children’s Services, Public health and external provision into a single Early Help offer capable of delivering consultancy and lead professional capacity in areas including - homelessness, youth justice, substance and alcohol misuse, sexual health, family support.

3.13 The Corporate Parenting Board has its first official meeting as a board on 15th September. The model for the support programme for the Corporate Parenting Board is not yet in place but it is still hoped that the LGA can provide an experienced former DCS to undertake this work. The approach will be “live situation” support to CPP Members providing challenge and feedback through each meeting over the next six months.

3.14 Discussions are underway with Sanctuary Permanent Recruitment solutions (UK leading recruiters of permanent SW) to assist in the Country-wide targeted recruitment of 10 experienced Social Workers with a particular emphasis on the retention plan for West Cumbria.

3.15 CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER
3.16 In October Barnardo’s will be auditing case files focusing on the 50 case files previously deemed inadequate when they previously audited the files. They will be checking if all of the previously identified actions have taken place in a timely and meaningful way. In addition the auditors will run two feedback workshops for front line staff so that the whole process is more inclusive. A final summary report will be presented to the November meeting of the Improvement Board and will be made available for the Corporate Parenting Board.

3.17 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

3.18 The multi-agency Safeguarding Hub Programme Board reviewed a ‘stocktake’ report of the Hub’s progress which if accepted by the LSCB will inform the direction of the hub going forward.

3.19 As we remain reliant on the private sector to provide placements for a significant proportion of our children living away from home a Provider Forum is planned for October to meet with organisations providing both foster care and residential placements. The intention is to discuss Cumbria’s priorities for our children and budget pressures so they have an opportunity to shape their services to our needs.

3.20 QUALITY OF PRACTICE

3.21 The Social Work Academy was launched on 1st September – 8 high-calibre graduates have joined Children’s Services and have commenced on a robust and comprehensive Academy training programme.

3.22 The Children’s Social Care senior management team is in the process of implementing a programme of formal practice observation with the intention that everyone in social care will be observed at least once before the DfE review in the New Year. As well as providing constructive feedback to the individual, aggregated feedback will inform the commissioning of training and development in 2016/17.

3.23 Our impact indicators although gradually improving still continue to hold challenges for our practice. Increasing children and young people’s involvement in their reviews needs particular focus. In general terms young people at the recent County Children in Care Council workshop were not positive about their review meetings and it is clear that we need to think more creatively about how to make their involvement more meaningful for them.

3.24 The Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Assistant Directors have agreed to undertake monthly casefile audits alongside social care team managers. This is an exciting prospect not least because it directly evidences corporate ownership of the improvement programme. In addition directors will be auditing casefiles that may add some value to their own service area for example the Assistant Director for finance can audit a file of a young person in a high-cost placement and an Assistant Director in adult
services can audit a case file of a young person transitioning to adult services.

3.25 **CONCLUSION**

3.26 Comments and challenges from Scrutiny on this report are welcome and can be responded to through the standing Safeguarding and Improvement report.

**Fiona Musgrave, Senior Manager Improvement Programme and LSCB**

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**Appendices**

**Previous Relevant Council or Executive Decisions**
*Including Local Committees*

No previous relevant decisions.

**Background Paper**

No background papers.

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