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**Childrens Services Improvement Board
Chair – Stuart Smith
Friday 5th June 2020**

Attendees:

Name	Job Title
Adrian Farley	Cllr - Lead Portfolio Holder Children and Families
Ali-Jan Haider	Bradford CCG
Amandip Johal	Head of Service - Safeguarding Reviewing and Quality Assurance
Jane Booth	Chair and Independent Scrutineer – The Bradford Partnership
Jenny Cryer	AD Performance, Commissioning and Partnerships CBMDC
Joanne Hyde	Strategic Director Corporate Resources CBMDC
Mark Douglas	Strategic Director Children's Services CBMDC
Stuart Smith	Chair of the Improvement Board
In attendance	
Heidi Hardy	Programme Support Officer - minutes
Apologies	
Irfan Alam	Deputy Director Social Care CBMDC
Phil Hayden	Director of Programmes Children's Services and Innovation and Improvement
Susan Hinchcliffe	Cllr - Leader of the Council
Alisa Newman	Superintendent West Yorkshire Police
Helene Stewart	DfE

Ref.	Action / Decision	Action Owner
1.	Welcome and apologies Introductions were made. See above list of apologies.	
2.	<p>The board discussed the 4 reports which were prepared by officers. Comments have also been sought by all members of the Improvement Board.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the superb process Bradford did on previous occasion, having received more than 40 different comments and questions, it was felt that this was a transparent and challenging dialogue and thanked officers for their written responses. MD agreed the process went really well and was pleased with the level of engagement, challenge and commitment of the partnership in the process.</p> <p>The chair reported that the Bradford Partnership itself are meeting every week and sharing data that is collected every week which has been really helpful and way</p>	

	<p>more detailed than other LA's. It was noted that Covid has brought a better understanding of the issues of the improvement work.</p> <p>In relation to the Supervision questions which were raised previously – AJ explained in terms of policy she had redrafted the policy and will include an aspect around appraisals in the final version which will go to staff Tri-X platform soon. In terms of training, Traci Taylor is looking at pulling a schedule together for managers. A new form for case discussions to be built into LCS and system changes are required to enable and monitor practice changes and improvement.</p> <p>Stuart Smith reported that Heather Lacey has sent her comments in about Early Help coordinators. There are now 8-12 in post and lots of positive feedback to date however Heather suggests more awareness raising around how the Early Help Co-coordinators will work has there been with schools?</p> <p>Action: MD to liaise with Marium as part of Covid 19 update to Headteachers. MD confirmed that the remaining ones will be coming into post this week and all 12 operational in next week or two.</p>	<p>MD/MH</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Audit update</p> <p>Key points:-</p> <p>It was noted that the compliance rate has increased which is a significant improvement.</p> <p>Practice – report gives mixed overview some levels of improvement but there continues to be some challenges for the board linking with wider issues. Need to ensure policies are right, practice changes and wider IT challenges are all pulled together.</p> <p>Moderations – more needs to be done to ensure consistency of judgement across moderators. As staffing stability increases will result in consistency of grades.</p> <p>JB welcomed the level of detail in the report and agreed that more work was required in respect of moderation, further training and the development of the case management system is required.</p> <p>MD welcomed the report which highlights progress and where sharp focus is required. The inability to bring staff together due to Covid has hindered progress however redesign of Liquid Logic and better reports will help us accelerate training and development.</p> <p>JH mentioned that the quality is still not here and we need to continue to work towards this and need to be more consistent in terms of compliance.</p> <p>Cllr Farley found this a helpful report and his main observation was there is still a way to go concerns on quality of practice. He also stressed the need to have an improvement re child voice and lived experience.</p>	

	<p>The Chair found 2 areas for further development:</p> <p>Concerned only half SW's involved in case audits. Needs conversations with the auditor being made mandatory?</p> <p>The report mentions QA training offered but not that well attended which is crucial. Moderation of auditors is quite a challenge. Action: AJ to ensure that the auditor who is responsible to book in sessions with the SW makes sure this happens.</p> <p>Moderations – it is hoped that the change in staffing in audit team settles down and will start to show a positive impact.</p> <p>SS asked to see corrective actions from previous month which Ofsted will always request when they visit.</p> <p>Action: Amandip to include a paragraph at end the extent to which the things of concerns from previous month have been addressed and will provide regular update for each audit report.</p>	<p>AJ</p> <p>AJ</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Vital Signs report – Mark Douglas</p> <p>Key points from the report:-</p> <p>The report was based on the end of April's figures and there has been movement across a number of these indicators through early part of May and June which improve the picture.</p> <p>CSC contacts – there has been a downturn in referrals following lockdown.</p> <p>Senior management team and politicians have undertaken lot of work with the partnership and council to identify and encourage vulnerable children and encourage partners to make referrals into CSC. Latest figures show returned to pre-Covid figures. Schools responded and identified a number of children who have been stepped up in to Early Help or statutory service. It is noted that EH co-ordinators are now coming into post and Mark will provide an update to Headteachers.</p> <p>P7 talks about referrals downturn. Rolling 12 month same as statistical neighbours however it is anticipated there will be an increased level of demand due to Covid which has been discussed with Irfan Alam and Nabeel and Children's Social Care Heads of Service regarding preparations for requests and it is understood there is sufficient capacity to manage this. JB pointed out the seriousness of cases is increasing having an impact on other levels of concerns which are waiting. This may require additional capacity. Mark agreed the complexity of cases is much more challenging and lots of activity on Early Help is being undertaken. Cases presenting with level of unmet need.</p>	

Legal Proceedings are double currently compared to this time last year. It was noted there is limited engagement with families earlier on to prevent escalation of risk and harm. This has been raised at CMT and through the Partnership weekly meetings who are sighted on the challenging period going forward.

Rate of children on CP's figure risen during April and it is noted that partners unwilling to de-register children due to Covid as per the above discussion without full and informed conversations.

JB mentioned additional guidance has been issued around how to manage remote meetings which partners have found helpful. Need to ensure reports are shared in a timely manner.

Children in Care numbers - above our statistical neighbours now however following Covid 19 a letter from Secretary of State has been issued asking no child to be discharged during this period and included care leavers. Further discussion around the complexities around discharge took place.

High Cost Placement report - MD highlighted the challenge to staff over the next 6-12 months is that only the children who need to be in care need are in care and decisions to discharge do not drift.

Timeliness – CIC visits numbers up during April. May numbers have increased further up to 94% range which is an improving picture and staff have mainlined contact and doorstep visits.

CP visits also increasing in terms of compliance. May show an improvement and will be in upper half of 90% range. Again contact has been maintained.

Contacts in 1 working day - Further increases in May turning around Front Door. Locality working and assessments being done in a timely way.

77% of Assessments - range of compliance and timeliness improved and a number of cases closed as per Amandip's audit report.

The Chair commented on the positive data relating to both timeliness and caseloads.

JB – feedback from partner agencies one figure is strategy meetings which have reduced more than expected. Will submit a question and Mark will look into this and respond.

Section 3 – Management - Average caseloads - seen a decrease in average caseloads as Social Workers have more capacity as are not currently travelling to finish pieces of work. Several hundred cases are now closed resulting in a positive caseload. MD stressed we have to anticipate increase demand as we come more fully out of lockdown.

Irfan continues to track high and low numbers to make sure we have allocation of resource.

Recruitment activity - MD reported a successful period for middle and front line management level and more permanent appointments however challenge is recruiting L3 qualified Social Workers. To address this, Irfan is looking to release agency staff and look at targeted campaign. MD will agree recruitment strategy next week.

Bradford remains good at retaining through AYSE and there is a need to make the offer more attractive once they come out of that period.

There is more use of Evolve processes for sickness and it is noted sickness absence rates are fairly low through during this period and lower than last year. Where staff had to self-isolate due to Covid they have returned to work quickly.

MD concerned re impact of the Track and Trace system as could potentially take down a whole team (at a children's home for instance) and is therefore working with Irfan to put staff into staff groups on a rota. JH pointed out that testing for staff is up and running now and any member of staff who presents will get results back in 24 hours resulting in staff group only isolating for a short period.

AJH asked reasons why we struggle to recruit level 3 experienced social workers. MD pointed out that there was a national shortage. Estimated 2000 few social workers qualifying annually plus some going off to work in less pressured areas. There are also local reasons too and a real challenge around equality of salaries and which is being addressed. Work around caseloads and permanent management support will hopefully encourage people to return. Looking at a grow your own scheme which will be progressed but won't meet the demand. Will see some traction over the next year.

Cllr Farley mentioned concerns about capacity of Social Workers and decline in referrals – need to ensure we have sufficient capacity as neglect and harm hasn't gone away. Concerns at number of Level 3 staff and number of agency staff. MD clarified that Irfan Alam was working on a strategy with legal and finance. **Action: MD to pick up recruitment strategy with Irfan and get it through the proper corporate processes quickly. It is anticipated this will be shared next week.**

MD

Cllr Farley asked in terms of reassurance of care leavers, employment and training as vulnerable group what are we doing?

MD explained contact increased on a weekly basis for every care leaver. Also enhanced support to care leavers which is supported. JC agreed that employment was a really important issue which was being discussed by CMT including impacts for the whole of Bradford in terms of unemployment and recession which needs thinking. Proposals are making better use of general programmes also in process of significant investment for young people in Bradford to develop their skills sets. MD will make sure a tailored response as a Corporate Parent going forward.

The Chair agreed that recruitment was possibly Bradford's biggest challenge. However having attended a staff reference group earlier this year where he

	<p>learned that practice supervisors were an area of support highly valued by staff to give confidence. Recent recruitment of a19 Practice Supervisors with more to come and will have a positive impact on staff and will attract staff to Bradford. SS was also pleased to see that the importance of vulnerable children's PEP's is being prioritised.</p> <p>MD reported he is fortnightly conversations with senior HMI. It is looking likely that there will be a revised inspection framework. There has also been an offer of support made when we come out of lockdown perhaps early September annual engagement meeting to provide scrutiny of data and conversations.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Improvement Highlight report - Mark Douglas</p> <p>MD stressed during lockdown period improvement work did not stop and a lot of activity is ongoing to create conditions and understand Children Services in Bradford.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standard of performance and practice have been improvement. • There is still demand in terms of the structure. MD to take paper on caseload model to CMT to ensure structure meets the demands of the district. • Early Help work continuing. Reduction in children coming in care and will see more. • Sufficiency strategy drafted and shared with partners setting out implications for all partners in Foster Care. • Improved data and quality – agreed with Phil Witcherley how this needs to be supported going forward. • Improvement in case management system. • Practice Standards signed off this week and distributed to staff. Training to follow. • Performance tracker – continuing to be developed and populated and used to drive children's cases through system to permanence • Performance indicators– general good news • All Social Work documents and Liquid Logic documents are now legally compliant. • Early Help module in final part of testing with IT. Will address high volumes of NFA once goes live on 1st July 2020. • Fostering allowances redrafted to ensure special guardianship and legislation compliant – will need to go through corporate process. • Ofsted monitoring visit preparations underway although the timing and format may change. • Front Door report from Nabeel provides update. Stuart Smith felt Nabeel Hussain already has a good grip of the Front Door which is reassuring. • Reviewing IRO 's fully established. <p>MD stressed the importance of getting the basics right and focus on quality will provide real rigour and process and will provide assurance in coming months.</p>	

	<p>Focus for next period will be around quality and good plans and assessments and are sighted on risk, fully sighted on cases now responsible for.</p> <p>JB welcomed the report found really helpful. In terms of Early Help JB realises not possible to roll out training during this period of time however will email Phil Hayden.</p> <p>JB mentioned the Standards in house document however felt it was important other agencies are aware of this. JB reported that the SAPP group will be resumed this week chaired by Nabeel Hussain. MD explained that the new Standards will be launched in the next few weeks and will be brought to the Safeguarding Board. It was noted that the content of the document has been partly designed by our own staff setting our aspirations.</p> <p>The Chair would like bullets points 4.1 – 4.4 to form the basis of more detail reports to future meetings.</p> <p>Action: Heidi to add points 4.1 – 4.4 to forward plan and inform Phil Hayden to ensure these are reported on at future meetings as and when appropriate.</p>	<p>HH</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Partnership update</p> <p>Case file auditing now with multi agency team. Amandip and Lawrence working together looking at areas of concern but have had benefit of looking at cases where CPPs have ceased and multi-agency involvement. More audits on the way. Routine work is being resumed next week and virtual board meeting taking place 24th June 2020. There is now a revised work plan and priorities. Big challenge is training as L3 training is about meeting with a range of professionals however training tools and resources are under review and Amandip and Jane meeting to look at Social Care new online platform. Extended out contract with virtual college and encourage staff to set time aside to train.</p> <p>Weekly meetings are still taking place. MD felt weekly meetings are critical in holding the partnership together and are in fact are an important part of the improvement work.</p> <p>AJH felt that work with Health was positive and working well but need to look at speed of progress.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Secretary of State has this week indicated that improvement boards will need to continue to have their six monthly reviews. On this basis, SS will make suggestions and will share with Mark and other partners. As before, the DfE will want to see Elected Members, staff and a focus group of front line staff possibly as a virtual meeting in next couple of months.</p>	