

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Health &amp; social care overview &amp; scrutiny committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>22 September 2015</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Children's safeguarding self-evaluation</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Head of safeguarding and quality</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key Decision**

This is not an executive decision.

## **Wards Affected**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

To comment on the children's self-evaluation document in the context of the directorates continuous improvement framework.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**THAT:**

- (a) Scrutiny comment on the children's self-evaluation document, and the identified areas for regional peer challenge**

## **Alternative options**

- 1 A self-evaluation document could not be prepared but this would not give the council an opportunity to evaluate its progress against its last self-assessment, nor afford the opportunity for regional comparison and shared learning.

## Reasons for recommendations

- 2 The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) hold an annual peer challenge day in October each year. The 14 local authorities within the region are invited to submit their self-evaluation so that an external peer view is given as to each authority across the region, with respect to the quality of their self-evaluation, the most effective approaches to its completion, and to ensure learning across the region as to shared thematic issues, and indeed pockets of excellence which can be learned from.

## Key considerations

- 3 The ADCS has been undertaking an annual peer challenge of self-assessment for the last three years.
- 4 It is an opportunity for Herefordshire to receive some external assessment and validation on its progress over the previous twelve months.
- 5 The following should be taken into consideration:
  - a. Whilst there is a generic template for completion by all authorities as to key demographic and performance information, and reflection as to progress in the last 12 months, each authority is at liberty to complete its self-assessment as it feels best helps them.
  - b. Given that Herefordshire received a 'Requires Improvement' outcome from its Ofsted Single Inspection Framework in June 2014, and has a stated ambition to get to 'Good' in Ofsted terms by 2016/17, the children's wellbeing senior management team decided to evaluate itself against the Ofsted 'Good' criteria and definition as currently operating.
  - c. Given that during intervention, the council had been required to maintain an improvement plan, and post intervention is choosing to continue to do so, the self-evaluation is best read in conjunction with the improvement plan.
  - d. The self-evaluation confirms that we are significantly better at knowing ourselves, in terms of our strengths and weaknesses, but need to improve the 'closing of the loop' to ensure that we are able to implement the changes identified and measure their impact on outcomes for children and families.
  - e. On 21 October 2015, a Regional Peer Challenge Summit is taking place, where each council's self-evaluation framework (SEF) is appraised and provides an opportunity to learn from each other as to how we can collectively learn from others who are strong in areas of self-identified weakness. Each council is asked to identify a particular area of challenge where it feels it would most benefit and lead members have been asked to provide feedback with regards to areas of business or performance that require improvement and challenge following the September monthly performance challenge meeting.
  - f. On the basis of this feedback and the challenges identified in the SEF, it is proposed that we prioritise our looked after children (LAC) services and systems for challenge, with the aspiration to learn from the region as to how to better succeed in reducing our LAC population and preventing children from becoming looked after.

## Community impact

- 6 The self-evaluation ensures that the directorate continues to focus on achieving against the council's priorities of keeping children and young people safe and giving them a great start in life and enabling residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives; improving access to learning opportunities at all levels and improved outcomes for children and young people.

## Equality duty

As the outcomes from the self-evaluation are identified and agreed actions formulated through the peer challenge process, equality impact assessments will be carried out where relevant to ensure that due regard is paid to the public sector equality duty as set out below:

Under Section 149, the "General Duty" on public authorities is set out thus:

"A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct ... prohibited by or under this Act;

advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."

## Financial implications

- 7 As this is a self-evaluation, there are no financial implications.

## Legal implications

- 8 There are no legal implications.

## Risk management

- 9 Risks associated with the failure to complete and share our self-assessment with regional colleagues are as follows:

- Reputation – West Midlands ADCS has agreed to this collective approach to support continuous improvement across the region, and to share and learn from each others strengths and weaknesses. It could potentially negatively impact on the performance and quality of our service for children and families if we failed to do so, and the council would risk returning to a position where there are widespread failures to protect children and young people from harm.
- Support with continuous improvement – Our annual self-assessment is a central plank within our continuous improvement framework, and as part of West Midlands ADCS, through the completion and peer analysis of our self-assessment, further support is available to us with respect to specific peer

challenge around our identified key area of concern. To fail to utilise such support would risk losing access to advice, expertise and knowledge to support our improvement.

## Consultees

- 10 The Children and Young People's Partnership executive group will be asked to comment on the self-evaluation at its meeting on 23 September 2015 and their views will be taken into consideration.
- 11 The self-assessment was presented to lead members at the monthly performance challenge meeting on 2 September for comment and feedback.
- 12 Risks associated with the failure to complete and share our self assessment with regional colleagues are as follows:
  - Reputation – West Midlands ADCS have agreed to this collective approach to support continuous improvement across the region, and to share and learn from each others strengths and weaknesses. It would potentially negatively impact on performance and quality of our service for children and families to fail to do so, and the council would risk returning to a position where there are widespread failures to protect children and young people from harm.
  - Support with continuous improvement – Our annual self assessment is a central plank within our continuous improvement framework, and as part of WM ADCS, through the completion and peer analysis of our self assessment, further support is available to us with respect to specific peer challenge around our identified key area of concern. To fail to utilise such support would risk losing access to advice, expertise and knowledge to support our improvement.

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## Appendices

- Appendix A ADCS self-evaluation – part A
- Appendix B Council's self-evaluation
- Appendix C Improvement plan
- Appendix D School improvement self-evaluation

## Background papers

- None identified