

7 November 2014

Framework for an Improvement Plan

Introduction

Following the publication of the Alexis Jay report into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in the town at the end of August 2014 the Leader of the Council put in place an Improvement Board in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA). The board will provide oversight, support and challenge to the authority's improvement and transformation journey.

At its first meeting, on 26 September 2014, the Board adopted the following terms of reference:

Rotherham Improvement Board – Terms of Reference

The Improvement Board is jointly established by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Local Government Association and will provide oversight, support and challenge to Rotherham's improvement and transformation journey following the publication of the Jay report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham and in due course in light of the findings of forthcoming inspections by both DCLG and Ofsted.

The Board aims to support the Council to:-

1. Restore public confidence in the Council.
2. Demonstrate its ambitions for its local communities.
3. Drive forward its plans for improvement in corporate governance and services in a timely way.
1. Prioritise what is most important.
5. Create the capacity and plans to embed lasting improvements and culture change.
1. Deliver improved services within realistic spending constraints.
7. Assist Rotherham to respond to the findings of the forthcoming inspection by Ofsted and the inspection by DCLG.

The Improvement Board's role is to:-

1. Provide support and guidance.
2. Identify and signpost appropriate good practice.
3. Provide challenge and act as a critical friend.
4. Ensure the contributions from different external agencies/bodies to Rotherham's improvement journey are coordinated.
5. Ensure there is a single, integrated and holistic improvement plan that can be clearly understood and communicated internally and externally and to receive regular reports on progress.
6. Advise on decisions which impact on political and managerial leadership arrangements, corporate governance and improvement in advance of those matters being considered by the Council's own decision-making structures, e.g. Cabinet or Council.

Inspections and reviews

Professor Jay's report makes fourteen recommendations to Rotherham Council, and one to the Department for Education. They are set out in Annex A to this report.

It also contains a summary of recommendations from earlier reports collated by the Safeguarding Board.

Following the publication of the report the government has commissioned further inspections and reviews:

- OFSTED have carried out an inspection (Single Inspection Framework) of Early Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers (onsite from 17th September to 8th October – report to be published 19th November 2014)
- OFSTED have carried out a separate thematic inspection of CSE (onsite from 22nd to 26th September – report to be published at the end of November)
- Louise Casey, a Director General at the CLG, is leading a Corporate Governance Inspection (onsite during October and November, with a report expected to be with Eric Pickles by 30th November)

Following a letter from the OFSTED Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw to the Secretary of State for Education, a Children's Commissioner, Malcom Newsam, has been appointed to oversee immediate improvements to the Council's delivery of children's services. Mr Newsam's appointment is for three months in the first instance. His terms of reference are attached as Annex B.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has also reported on the SY Police provision for child protection.

Immediate actions by the Council

The council has taken the following actions following the publication of Professor Jay's report, in addition to putting in place the Improvement Board:

- Appointed a new Leader of the Council and a newly constituted cabinet
- Appointed a lead member for Children & Education Services
- Appointed an interim Chief Executive, Ms Jan Ormandroyd, following the resignation of the current Chief Executive
- Initiated a process to appoint an interim Director of Children's Services following the resignation of the previous DCS

The role of the Improvement Plan

The Improvement Plan must draw on the findings and recommendations of external reviews and inspections, but must consolidate them into a single statement of the key challenges facing Rotherham Council. The challenges must be fully considered and fully owned by the Council. The Council should not be limited by the focus of external processes in setting out the challenges: some will be evident from its own analyses of the current operating context of Rotherham and of the local government sector as a whole.

The role of the Improvement Board is to provide advice, challenge and support, but responsibility for the plan must lie with the Council itself.

Each challenge will need to form the basis for a simple action plan, which sets out the key elements of response to the challenge, the key responsibilities for delivery, and key milestones and indicators of progress.

Key challenges – preliminary expectations

The Improvement Plan cannot be completed until the outstanding inspections, by OFSTED and Louise Casey, have reported, the Council has been able to reflect on their findings and recommendations, and the interim Chief Executive has been able to make her assessment. We are likely to be in that position until around the turn of the year.

It is possible, however, to set out a preliminary summary of the Council's challenges as currently perceived. It is useful to do so as a basis for focusing immediate actions and ordering discussion, challenge and support from the Improvement Board.

On that basis, a draft list of nine consolidated challenges is proposed.

1. Improvements across the partnership and those specifically within the council for arrangements around Child Sexual Exploitation, ensuring that all 14 local recommendations from the Jay report are quickly acted upon and improvements made. Detailed progress monitoring arrangements currently sit with the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Board and its CSE sub group
2. Wider improvements in children's safeguarding services to ensure that all services for children in need of help and protection are robust and that children are quickly and adequately safeguarded and protected from harm. OFSTED findings and the reports from Malcolm Newsam will form the basis for defining this area of challenge.
3. Rotherham's responses to these challenges will be made in the context of a period of further severe reductions in public spending both nationally and locally. Managing Rotherham's response to this financial context, and ensuring that the Council re-establishes a clear service offer to local residents, constitutes a third challenge

The Council needs to have a clear understanding of its future priorities, their organisational and financial implications, and the changes and improvements it needs to make to the organisation.

This will require the development and delivery of an organisational and service transformational change programme which will best allow Rotherham Council to meet residents future service needs at a time when further savings of £50m are required over the next 3 years (2015/16 to 2017/18), over and above the £93m it has made in the last 4 years

4. Ensure that the Council has the programme management disciplines and culture that is required to deliver its organisational and service transformation programme
5. Ensuring that there are clear and appropriate mutual expectations of both the roles of members and officers in relation to strategic and operational accountability, challenge and governance. Ensuring too that the culture and inter-personal relationships of the organisation are appropriate
6. Ensuring that Rotherham's performance management arrangements are embedded at all levels of the authority and that adequate openness, challenge and robustness is evident in these arrangements
7. Ensuring the most appropriate and effective use of the Overview and Scrutiny functions is in place to secure robust challenge of council decisions and functions of the council
8. Ensuring that a robust system for whistleblowing is in place, that there is a culture of welcoming challenge and responding well to it, and ensuring that staff feel comfortable to use the processes with confidence that their voices will be heard and acted upon

The Jay report recommends that the council take action to review its taxi licensing arrangements, a ninth action is therefore

9. Ensure that a comprehensive review of policies, practice and procedures is undertaken in relation to taxi licensing and that standards are enhanced where appropriate

It is important to recognise that Rotherham as a council cannot move forward alone and the partnerships it has developed over the years with both statutory organisations including health and the police and with its voluntary sector partners and those in the private sector are vital to its improvement journey.

10. The council needs to continue to review clarify and build on its partnership working

It is clear from recent emerging information that Rotherham is not alone with some of its key challenges, particularly in relation to CSE and that many councils and their partners face similar issues and the role of the improvement board and that of the LGA is to learn from the lessons in Rotherham and to

share the improvements with other councils, therefore the final challenge will be:

11. The council needs to share its learning from the improvement journey with other local authorities and partners

Improvement process and public confidence

It is evident that Rotherham Council's recent very public issues have had an impact on the image and reputation of the town, and on the confidence and pride of its residents. It is important that the improvement process is shared with residents and partners so that progress can help re-build confidence, and so that there is realism over what is achieved.

Timeline

It is expected that the Improvement Board will meet on a monthly basis for the immediate future; to review, support and challenge the implementation of the improvement programme.

Assessing progress of the improvements

Rotherham Council will want to demonstrate the improvement process using an appropriate balance of subtlety and objectivity. It will need to provide the Improvement Board with:

- Access to a range of views and reflections from the The Leader, Cabinet members, senior officers, trades unions and other key voices from within the council and from amongst its working partners. This access will be programmed so that the proposed stocktake in xxxx is fully informed
- Quarterly summarised position statements from the Chief Executive and, where appropriate, the other statutory officers
- Objective evidence of the impact of the actions arising from the eleven challenges, indicating progress from a clear set of baselines

Rotherham Improvement Plan – summary of strands of action

Strand	Key actions	Responsibility	Key tests of progress, and key milestones
1. Child Sexual Exploitation practice	•		•
2. Children’s safeguarding operational issues • Funding • Structure • Skills • leadership	•		•
3. The Council’s response to financial challenge and re-establishing a clear offer to local residents	•		•
4. Ensure a programme management culture is in place to deliver service transformation	•		•
5. Clarity of roles in relation to officer / member accountability, challenge and governance	•		•
6. Performance Management embedded at all levels	•		•
7. Ensure the most appropriate use of Overview and Scrutiny functions	•		•
8. Ensure there is a robust system for whistleblowing is in place	•		•
9. Review of policies, practice and procedures in relation to taxi licensing	•		•
10. Partnership working	•		•
11. Share learning and improvements with other local authorities	•		•