

PERFORMANCE REPORT: CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE (NOVEMBER 2017)

Report of the Head of Children's Social Care.

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: that the Committee notes the report

Performance and management information provides an overview of activity levels within the service, trends and emerging patterns of need that helps identify where performance is improving and where further investigation or targeted improvement action is required with an emphasis on sustained improvement in performance to become more aligned with that of "good" Local Authorities.

The Children's Services management information team work with managers to provide data on key areas of activity in order to support their management oversight of priority areas through the Performance Workbook (Appendix 1).

Work is progressing to ensure that when the Eclipse database is implemented there is continuity of performance and management information provision and that the overall range of information is increased with greater ability to analyse information at worker, team, locality and service levels.

1. Population Profile and caseloads

- 1.1 At the end of November 2017, children's social care services were working with 5,262 Children in Need which included 714 Children Looked After, 437 children subject to a child protection plan, and 268 disabled children receiving a financial package to fund a short break and 1,146 other disabled children and young people. The number is 4,111 excluding children Looked After or subject to a CP plan.

2. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and referrals

- 2.1 In Devon, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) facilitates multi-agency screening to enable decisions to be made about all information shared by professionals about children where there are safeguarding concerns. This enables concerns to be responded to by the most appropriate service, including Early Help or Children's Social Care where needed.
- 2.2 The volume of enquiries received by the MASH fluctuates throughout the year and can be affected by school holidays, awareness-raising campaigns and other activities. Of the enquiries received an increasing proportion are being

forward to social work teams for a single assessment (42.6% of 1,117 enquiries in November 2017 compared to 31.5% of 1,147 enquiries in November 2016) and this means that there is increased pressure on Initial Response teams to undertake (and other agencies to contribute to) and complete single assessments. More work is needed to understand the reasons for this and activity planned includes meeting with the managers of the relevant teams and further quality assurance activity.

- 2.3 Devon's re-referral rate is a little lower than the National and Statistical Neighbour rates. An audit of a small sample of recently re-referred cases is to be undertaken during the spring and it is intended that this will highlight whether or not more can be done to further reduce this rate.
- 2.4 Work continues to develop the optimal configuration of our 'front door' teams so as to provide the most timely and appropriate response to citizens and to referrers whilst also ensuring that the early help offer is well understood.

3. Children in Need

- 3.1 Children in Need are those identified by assessment to require advice and support. This includes those subject to a child protection plan, children in care and disabled children.
- 3.2 The overall number of child in need cases has risen slightly since the summer. Whilst this will be monitored closely, the rate has not risen at a rate that should cause any concern at this time.
- 3.3 The number of single assessments started has increased in recent months and the percentage of these that have at outcome of 'case closed' at the conclusion of the assessment is 40% across the year. This is something that the service is currently looking into as it may be indicative of a number of factors, including assessments being opened where one might not have been required had more information been gathered at the time of the enquiry and a sample of some of these assessments will be audited to shine a light on this. The use of 'case closed' as an outcome can itself be misleading as it does not necessarily mean that the family was offered no support during the period of assessment. In many cases, families will have been offered information, advice, or guidance, or signposted to other services.
- 3.4 Currently, 75% of single assessments have been completed and authorised within 45 working days of being commenced. This is below our target rate of 85% and the Head of Service will be reminding managers of service expectations at the Service Development Meeting on 23 January 2018.

4. Child Protection

- 4.1 The number of children and young people who are the subject of a child protection plan has been reducing steadily since August 2017 and numbered 437 at the end of November (from 511 in August). The rate per 10,000 in Devon is currently 30/10000 which is below the national and statistical neighbour rates.

- 4.2 Recent data indicates that 16% of plans cease within 3 months of starting which suggests that, in some cases, we might do more to manage risk through child in need arrangements rather than on a child protection plan and the service is currently undertaking an audit of some of these cases to inform our thinking about how we might better do this.
- 4.3 There is no apparent single reason why CP numbers are reducing at this time and Members will know that numbers have fluctuated over the past two years. This will be monitored by the service and analysis made over time to determine what impact, if any, the revised conference model and changes to strengthen child in need practice may be having.

5. Children Looked After and Care Leavers

- 5.1 The number of children in care as at the end of November 2017 was 714. 509 (71%) are the subject of either an interim or a full Care Order and 158 (22%) are accommodated by voluntary agreement (section 20).
- 5.2 The challenges of identifying suitable placements within the County for some children and young people has previously been reported and placement choice and sufficiency remains a challenge to the service. These challenges have an impact on areas of performance such as visiting, arranging initial health assessments, and placement stability.
- 5.3 Despite the distance involved in some visits, the percentage of children Looked After who have been visited within statutory timescales remains high and has been consistently at or above 90% since April 2017.
- 5.4 462 of 714 children Looked After have had just one placement in the past twelve months and 162 have had two placements. 90 children and young people have had three or more placements in the past twelve months and it is anticipated that work to develop placement sufficiency and choice in the coming year will help to reduce this number and further improve placement stability.
- 5.5 Most recent data regarding our care leavers indicates that the service is now 'in touch' with 82% of our care leaver cohort compared to the 70% reported in our most recent statutory return (March 2017) and that more care leavers (46%) are known to be in education, employment or training (EET) compared to 32% in March 2017.

6. Adoption

- 6.1 Devon's Adoption services continue to perform well compared to the England and statistical neighbour averages and timely and robust permanency planning arrangements are evidenced by almost 70% of children waiting less than 14 months between entering care and placement for adoption.

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children Services and Schools: Councillor James McInnes

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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