

Children and Families Improvement Partnership Board

Partnership Board report

Date: 9th January 2024

Board Member and Organisation:	
Steve Liddicott, Interim Deputy Director, Children’s Health and Wellbeing	
Ask of Board:	
Decision needed by the Board	
Information to update the Board	x
Monitoring on performance by the Board	x
Information or Decision detail:	
Action: To Provide an Update on the Children’s Social Care Performance Measures contained within the Improvement Plan	
Recommendation:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is for information and to assure the Improvement Partnership Board (IPB) that the performance data is being collated and used to inform the improvement journey. 	

1 Context

1.1 The Social Care Improvement Plan contains the performance measures which are set out in the attached table. There are separate measures for the Partnership Improvement Plan.

1.2 An additional column has been added to the table showing actual numbers of children, this is either a single number (usually where the performance measure is expressed as a rate per 10,000 children) or in the format of X / Y where X is the number of children represented by the percentage and Y the total number of children in the cohort.

1.3 The format of this report differs from that presented to the December meeting of the Board. Rather than following the child's journey, this report considers the performance measures under the following headings:

- Volume of Activity
- Process
- Impact

Members of the IPB are invited to comment on whether this is a helpful way of reviewing the data

1.4 In December 2023, the DfE published details of the "Children's social care: national framework". This is statutory guidance on the principles behind children's social care, its purpose, factors enabling good practice and what it should achieve. The outcome measures in the improvement plan will need to be reviewed in the light of that framework.

2 Volume of Activity

2.1 The following measures record the volume of activity across children's social care services:

- Contacts to children's social care (per 10,000) – 439
- Number of referrals - 599
- % of referrals which are repeat referrals – 22%
- Initial Assessments completed in the period (per 10,000) - 466

- Section 47 enquiries (per 10,000) - 201
- ICPCs (per 10,000) - 51
- Rate of children in need at point in time (per 10,000) - 259
- Children who are the subject of a child protection plan at period end (per 10,000) - 36
- Children looked after at period end (per 10,000) - 61

2.2 The numbers of contacts and referrals have returned to the same levels recorded at the beginning of the year having dipped during the summer. The rate of contacts per 10,000 children remains lower than comparators. The rate of assessments completed and S47 enquiries continues to vary from month to month; the former is generally lower than comparators and the latter generally higher. The rates of children in need and of Initial Child Protections Conferences are lower than in comparators as are the rates of children subject to a protection plan and children looked after. After increasing in October, the percentage of referrals that are repeats has dropped back to the same level recorded earlier in the year which is broadly in line with comparators.

2.3 Following the increase in the percentage of repeat referrals reported in October, a review of repeat referrals was undertaken which identified system process issues which are being addressed as part of the review of the MASH / Front Door review. This percentage is therefore not expected to fluctuate to the same extent again.

2.4 Almost all the other measures of activity are lower than those reported by comparators. As discussed at the last meeting of the IPB, there is a need to consider whether these are the “right” levels of activity to address the needs of the children and young people in Devon. We will therefore be making arrangements to undertake a strategic needs analysis for children and young people in Devon which will help us to be able to understand whether services are identifying the right numbers of children that may be in need of support and protection.

3 Process

3.1 The following measures record the completion of processes:

- Conversion contact to referral – 31%
- Conversion contact to Assessment – 19%
- % initial assessments with outcome Case to Close – 59%

- % of initial assessments completed in 45 days – 79%
- % S47s that progress to ICPC – 8%
- % ICPCs completed within 15 days of S47 – 77%
- % of children subject to CPP for 2 years plus – 0%
- % children starting a CP plan who have been subject to a previous CP plan – 38%
- CiC starts (per 10,000) - 20
- CiC ends (per 10,000) - 25

3.2 The low conversion rates (contacts to referral and contacts to assessment) together with the very low level of S47 enquiries (8% compared to 30% plus in comparators) leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference all underline the need for planned work to be completed on reviewing thresholds across partner agencies and within children’s social care to ensure that the right children are receiving the right level of support. This is already being planned by the safeguarding partnership, through the review of early help services (with Essex) and the review of the front door services (with Hertfordshire). The relatively high percentage of assessments completed with an outcome of “case to close” provides further evidence of the need for these reviews to be undertaken.

3.3 The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days dropped slightly in November and is slightly lower than the rate of comparators. This is something to be addressed by the additional management capacity brought into the assessment service in December 2023. The percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences completed within 15 days of the decision to commence a S47 enquiry remains stable but is at a lower rate than achieved earlier in the year and a focus for the child protection conference management. Currently no children have been the subject of a child protection plan for more than two years which suggests that protection plans are now being implemented effectively with children either being protected in their families or through the use of care proceedings. However, the high rate of children becoming subject to a child protection plan who have previously been subject to a protection plan (38% compared to 24% in comparators) suggests that this has not always been the case in the past. This is an area for the audit team to review.

3.4 The rate of children looked after has been stable at around 61 per 10,000 (approximately 900 looked after children) since March 2023. The number of children starting / ceasing to be looked after remains stable at around 20 to 25 per month which accounts for the stability in the number of looked after children.

4 Impact

4.1 The following measures are a proxy for the impact of the services provided:

- % of CIN with an up to date visit – 89%
- % of CP with an up to date visit – 89%
- % of CIC with an up to date visit – 89%
- % of CEP with an up to date visit – measure being developed
- % children who had three or more placements in the year – 15%
- % of CIC with an up to date health assessment – 83%
- % of CIC with a permanence plan – 98%
- Number of under 16s in unregistered accommodation - 9
- % Care Leavers in Touch – 93%
- % Care Leavers in Touch (17-18 years old) – 84%
- % Care Leavers in Touch (19-21 years old) – 96%
- % Care Leavers in suitable Accommodation – 82%
- % Care Leavers in suitable Accommodation (17-18 years old) – 78%
- % Care Leavers in suitable Accommodation (19-21 years old) – 85%
- % Care Leavers in EET – 41%
- % Care Leavers in EET (17-18 years old) – 46%
- % Care Leavers in EET (19-21 years old) – 42%
- % of Pathway plans up to date – 86%

4.2 Almost 90% of children with a child in need plan, child protection plan or looked after were visited within the expected timescales. Comparable data is not available. Visits are an indication of practitioners working directly with the children and young people for whom they are responsible. Whilst, ideally, all children should be visited within the expected timescales, there will always be some

that cannot be seen. Arrangements should be in place to cover staff absences (for example) for visits to the most vulnerable you people (e.g. those in unregistered placements). Over the course of the next 3 months, we will seek to obtain comparable data from neighbouring authorities in order to make a comparison.

- 4.3 The frequency of visits to care experienced people is usually derived from the “in touch” reporting. However, because “in touch” reporting is link visits to the collection of other data, it is not the same as a record of a visit. A new report is therefore being developed to monitor visits to care experienced people.
- 4.4 The percentage of children looked after with 3 or more placements in the last 12 months has decreased to 15%. This is an improvement but still above the rates for comparators. Improvements in placements stability will be linked to the work being done to increase placement sufficiency which is the subject of a separate report to the IPB. Similarly, a reduction in the number of children in unregistered placements will be contingent on improving the availability of placements, both in house and commissioned. There are plans to move all the under 16s in unregistered placements to a registered placement in the first three months of 2024. For the over 16s, plans are focussed on their transition to adulthood.
- 4.5 There is no comparator information for the percentage of children with a permanency plan. All children should have a permanency plan (which may include more than one option) by the time of their second statutory review (i.e. when they have been looked after for 4 months). Ofsted have previously been critical of the lack of permanency planning for looked after children in Devon. This measure is monitored regularly and maintaining a high level of compliance means that we are actively planning for the our looked after children.
- 4.6 All looked after children should have an up to date health assessment. Currently, 83% of our looked after children have an up to date health assessment which is lower than comparators who average 90% completion rates. Whilst some young people may decline to have an assessment, we will need to work with health colleagues to improve the rate of completion.
- 4.7 The measures for care experienced people (in touch, accommodation and education, employment and training) are presented in three formats to reflect the overall performance of the leaving care service (all CEP – i.e. aged 18 to 24) as well as the two age groups that are the subject of statutory reporting (17 / 18 year olds and 19 / 21 year olds). The overall in touch rate of 93% has

been consistent; there needs to be an improvement in the measure for 17 / 18 year olds. The development of the new visit measure for CEP will assist in providing a more detailed analysis.

4.8 When the DfE special advisor on CEP, Mark Riddell undertook a follow up visit to Devon in December, progress on the development of education, employment and training opportunities as well as the work with district councils to improve the accommodation offered to CEP was reported. This has yet to filter through to the measures reported here.

4.9 Currently, 89% of pathway plans for CEP are up to date. This is lower than previously reported. A new pathway plan format has been developed in consultation with CEP and that should assist in improving the timeliness of the completion of pathway plans.

5 Audit

5.1 Performance measures relate to the completion of audits. Members of the IPB will be aware that a new the audit programme has been developed and implemented over the course of the year, with a month on month increase in the number of audits completed each month. By January 2024, all areas of the service will be completing audits each month and it will be possible to populate this part of the table.

5.2 Currently, we are only able to report consistently on the percentage of audits with feedback from families. The base line was 22% and performance has been around 30% with a target of 80%. It is expected that as the audit framework becomes more embedded across the service, this will improve. We have now recruited a new, permanent audit team and they will be instrumental in ensuring good practice in the audit process when they come into post early in 2024.

6 Staffing

6.1 Included within this section of the report are the following performance measures:

- Agency Rate % of QSW (FTE) against Permanent Establishment (48%)
- Average caseloads (17)

- Supervisions overdue (10.2%)

6.2 The agency rate for qualified social workers in April 2023 was 47% with a plan to reduce the rate by 10% by March 2024. It increased in September 2023 because of the introduction of new social work posts following the reshape earlier in the year. The agency rate decreased slightly in November. Together with a rolling recruitment programme for both social workers and advanced social workers, we recruited 10 newly qualified social workers (ASYEs) who joined us earlier in the autumn and have 8 “overseas” social workers due to join us in early 2024. We have several apprentice social workers together with two teams of frontline social work trainees. The social work academy is crucial to the support of ASYEs, the overseas social workers and other staff joining the service as well as supporting student social workers placed in Devon who, if they have a positive experience during their placement(s), are likely to apply for jobs with the council when they qualify. Together with colleagues in the council’s human resources directorate, we are about to update and relaunch our recruitment and retention strategy.

6.3 Average caseloads are slightly above the target for the end of the year and have increased over the course of the year. Further work is being undertaken in order to understand this trend given that it has occurred at the same time as more posts have been created in some parts of the service although not all of those posts have been filled as yet.

6.4 Reporting on overdue supervisions has now been developed and incorporated into the attached table. The measure is reporting on the completion of a supervision record for each child / young person, i.e. of the 4316 children open to children’s social care in November, 10% of those due to be discussed during the course of supervision did not have a supervision record attached. As well as being a record of supervision, this is also a measure of management oversight of the work being undertaken with each child / young person. It is not the same as a measure of the recording of supervision for each practitioner (their personal development and well-being which is recorded separately).

Link to Improvement Plan outcomes for children and families:

Change:

- Children and young people have their voices heard, and their experiences are understood

Leadership:

- Children and young people in our care, or leaving our care, are healthy, feel safe and reach their full potential.

