

Children and Families Improvement Partnership Board

Partnership Board report

Date: 7th May 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. • For the IPB to note that performance across some measures remains variable 	

- To invite members of the IPB to identify which performance measures they consider to be most important, where ambitious targets should be set, and what they / the partnership board can do to contribute to achieving them.

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. The data shown is as of the end of March 2024.
- 1.2 This report follows the same format as those previously presented to the Improvement Partnership Board. On this occasion, it shows the data for both February and March. Some of the indicators for March will continue to change as workflows are completed in Eclipse, the social care reporting system.
- 1.3 Since the report presented to the April meeting of the Improvement Partnership Board:
- The early signs of a reduction in the volumes of activity at the Front Door and through the practice system continue to be evidenced.
 - The impact of the work undertaken in the Front Door, including the introduction of the Consultation Line, continues to show a reduction in the rate of contacts and referrals. This is beginning to translate into lower numbers of assessments.
 - The rate of S47 enquiries leading to a child protection conference increased to 33% in January but appears to have fallen in February - a refresh of the data has identified that this indicator can only be accurately measured 4 to 6 weeks after the end of the reporting month.
 - There has been an improvement in the percentage of initial child protection conferences held within 15 days of the strategy discussion that decided on the need for a Section 47 Enquiry (from a low of 59% in December to 84% in February). The improvement was expected because of increased management oversight and monitoring of progression of S47 enquiries. When refreshed, the March data is expected to show that this has been maintained.
 - Improvement in the rate of assessments completed within 45 days to 86%.
 - An average of 30% of children subject to a child protection plan have previously been the subject of a child protection plan ever. The Quality Assurance Service are reviewing these children so that we can understand the reasons for the repeat plans. An average of 16% of children subject to a child protection plan have been made subject to a child protection plan within 2 years of their previous plan.

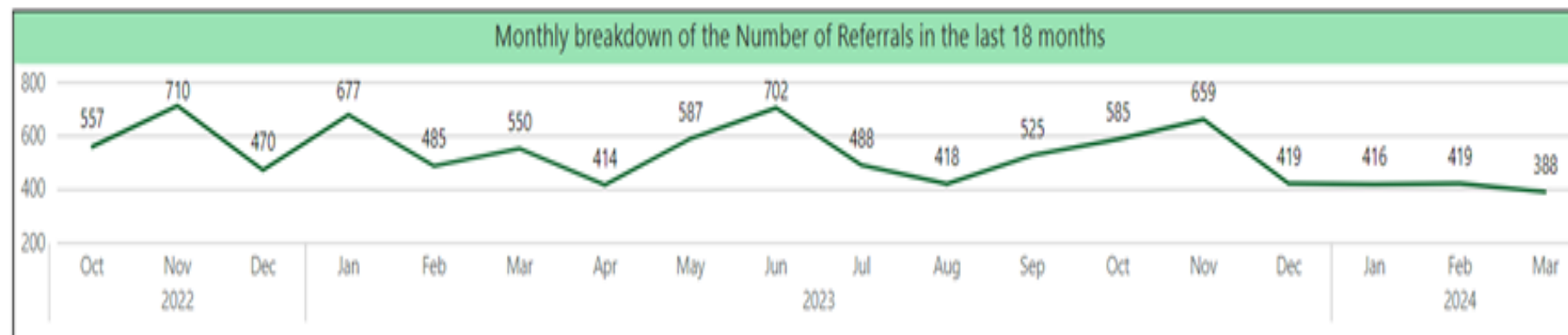
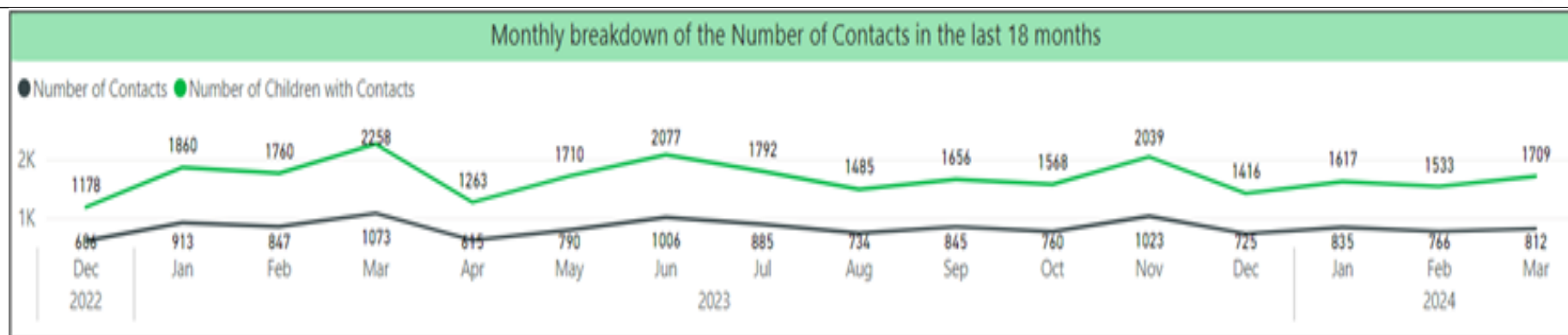
- 95% of children subject to protection plans are visited within timescales.
- The corporate parenting board is developing a new data set to better show the impact of the work being done to support looked after children and care experienced adults.

2 Volume of Activity

2.1 The following measures record the volume of activity across children's social care services in March 2024:

- Contacts to children's social care (per 10,000) is 317 which is 1709 contacts
- Number of referrals is 388
- % of referrals which are repeat referrals is 27% i.e. 104 out of 388 referrals were repeats
- Initial Assessments completed in the period (per 10,000) is 359 (440 assessments)
- Section 47 enquiries (per 10,000) is 156 (156 S47s)
- ICPCs (per 10,000) is 41 (50 ICPCs)
- Rate of children in need at point in time (per 10,000) is 279 i.e. 4093 children in need
- Children who are the subject of a child protection plan at period end (per 10,000) is 32 i.e. 469 children subject to a CPP
- Children looked after at period end (per 10,000) is 60 i.e. 874 children looked after

2.2 In March, the number of contacts increased slightly compared to January (1709 compared to 1617) but the number of referrals has fallen slightly (388 compared to 416). The rate of contacts per 10,000 children remains lower than comparators. This continues to be evidence of the impact of the work undertaken in the front door and a better understanding of levels of need, i.e. a reduction in the rate of referrals and lower numbers of assessments completed (579 in January, 467 in March).



- 2.3 The rate of assessments completed (359 per 10,000) has decreased since January when it was 459 per 10,000, which is lower than the regional average. The rate of S47 enquiries has continued to decrease and is lower than comparators. This lower rate of S47s is attributed to the work that has been done with staff working in the front door teams.
- 2.4 The rates of children in need, children subject to a protection plan and children looked after continues to be lower than comparators. The number of children subject to a child protection plan has decreased over the course of the last 6 months from 555 in September 2023 to 469 at the end of March 2024. The number of children looked after has reduced from 905 in July 2023 to 874 in March 2024.

The rate of Initial Child Protections Conferences has decreased to 41 per 10,000 which is lower than the average so far in 2023/24 and comparators. This is a consequence of the reduction in S47 enquiries. The timeliness of initial child protection conferences was 84% at the end of February 2024 and the latest report for March was 68% which will improve further when the data is refreshed.

2.5 Whilst not part of the performance indicators reported to the IPB, it is of note that:

- The number of children and families in pre-proceedings has continued at the same rate reported in April (60% of the number this time last year);
- The improvement in the duration of pre-proceedings has been continued with less than 50% taking longer than 16 weeks;
- The reduction in the number of children for whom we have issued care proceedings has continued;
- Whilst there has been a decrease in the number of children for whom we have issued proceedings, there has been an increase in the number of children in care proceedings across the county since the start of 2023 due to the (lack of) timeliness of care proceedings. The reasons for this are: finding of fact hearings, previous social work delay and some purposeful delay being identified in several cases, the need for `course correction` to ensure the right plan is in place and renewed focus on several legacy cases and court capacity.

2.6 There was a significant increase in the percentage of repeat referrals reported in October 2023 (27%), followed by a reduction in January 2024 to 24%. This has increased again (25% in January and 27% in February) which has necessitated a further review of the reasons for that increase.

2.5 Almost all the other measures of activity are lower than those reported by comparators. As discussed at previous meetings 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. Work on 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 need support and protection.

3 Process

3.1 The following measures record the completion of processes in March 2024:

- Conversion contact to referral is 22%, i.e. 376 referrals from 1709 contacts

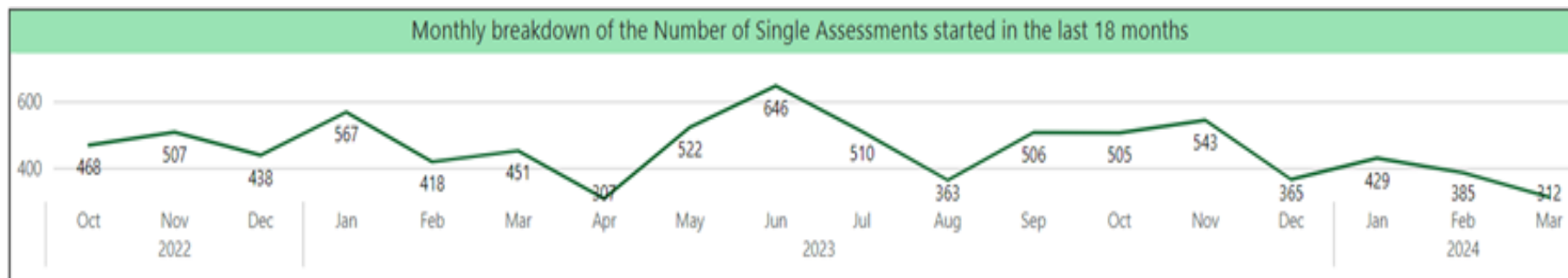
- Conversion contact to assessment is 17% - 291 assessments commenced from 1709 contacts
- % initial assessments with outcome Case to Close is 46% - 214 assessments with an outcome of case to close out of 467 completed
- % of initial assessments completed in 45 days is 86% - 377 out of 440 assessments completed within 45 days
- % S47s that progress to ICPC – 15% - 23 out of 156 S47s completed progressed to an ICPC
- % ICPCs completed within 15 days of S47 is 68% - 34 out of 50 ICPCs were completed within 15 days of the strategy meeting that led to the S47 enquiry
- % of children subject to CPP for 2 years plus is 1% - 5 out of 469
- % children starting a CP plan who have been subject to a previous CP plan is 33% - 14 out of 42 children starting a CPP had previously been the subject of a previous CPP
- CiC starts (per 10,000) is 16 (children started to be looked after).
- CiC ends (per 10,000) is 24 (children ceased to be looked after).

3.2 The low conversion rates (contacts to referral and contacts to assessment) continues to highlight the need for further work to be undertaken 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 now in progress through the safeguarding partnership (a review of the threshold document has commenced, led by the police officer who chairs the MASH Strategic Board), through the review of early help services (undertaken by Leeds) and the review of the front door and assessment services (with Hertfordshire). Where performance fluctuates, we are better placed to identify and address these changes in real time.

3.3 The percentage of initial assessments with outcome Case to Close is 46% - 214 assessments with an outcome of case to close out of 467 completed. This is lower than it has been previously suggesting that decision making about which children to assess has improved.

3.3 The rate of conversions of S47 enquiries to ICPCs reduced from 33% in January to 19% in February 2024 (66 out of 210 S47s progressed to an ICPC). The measure records the month in which the S47 is completed although it is only counted when the ICPC has been held which may not be until the following month – the current figure for March is 15% which will increase when the data is refreshed. The data report shows that the average over the course of the last year has been just over 30% which is in line with comparators. However, that does still mean that almost 70% of the S47s undertaken do not result in an ICPC meaning that some families experience an unnecessary intrusion into their lives. The work on thresholds referred to above should help to target S47s on those children where

there is a risk of significant harm. The relatively high percentage of assessments completed with an outcome of “case to close” (down to 51% in February and currently 46% in February) provides further evidence of the need for these reviews to be undertaken.



- 3.4 The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days improved in January to 85%, dipped to 69% in February but increased to 86% in February which is higher than the average for the year to date; this is slightly higher than that of comparators.
- 3.5 The percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences completed within 15 days of the decision to commence a S47 enquiry increased to 86% in February 2024 which is in line with comparators. Currently, the measure is showing as 68% for March (although the data has yet to be refreshed following which the measure will increase).
- 3.6 Five children (1%) of the children subject of a child protection plan have been the subject of a plan for more than two years. This is an increase from November when none of the children had been the subject of a plan for longer than 2 years. This is significantly lower than comparators (around 4%) but will be monitored closely by the child protection conferencing service since this is a measure of the effectiveness of protection plans with children either being protected in their families or by instigating care proceedings. However, the rate of children becoming subject to a child protection plan who have previously been subject to a protection plan (33%, 14 children) has been similar for much of the last year, is slightly higher than the rate of comparators and will continue to be closely monitored.

3.7 The rate of children looked after has been stable at around 61 per 10,000 since March 2023 although the number of children has reduced from over 900 to 874. The number of children starting / ceasing to be looked after remains stable at around 20 of each per month.

4 Impact

4.1 The following measures are a proxy for the impact of the services provided as of March 2024:

- % of CIN with an up-to-date visit – 87% - 773 out of 888
- % of CP with an up-to-date visit – 95% - 455 out of 469
- % of CIC with an up-to-date visit – 87% - 762 out of 874
- % of CEP with an up-to-date visit – measure being developed
- % children who had three or more placements in the year is 14% - 125 children had 3 or more placements in the last year out of a total of 874
- % of CIC with an up-to-date health assessment is 77% - 476 children out of 620 have an up-to-date health assessment
- % of CIC with a permanence plan is 97% - 791 out of 814 children have a permanence plan
- Number of under 16s in unregistered accommodation - 12
- % Care Leavers in Touch is 90% - 479 out of all 532 care leavers
- % Care Leavers in Touch (17-18 years old) is 83% - 110 out of 132 care leavers aged 17 and 18
- % Care Leavers in Touch (19-21 years old) is 98% - 286 out of 292 care leavers aged 19 to 21
- % Care Leavers in suitable Accommodation is 81% - 431 out of 532 care leavers
- % Care Leavers in suitable Accommodation (17-18 years old) is 73% - 96 out of 132 care leavers aged 17 and 18
- % Care Leavers in suitable Accommodation (19-21 years old) is 87% - 254 out of 292 care leavers aged 19 to 21
- % Care Leavers in EET is 42% - 223 care leavers out of 532 are in education, employment or training
- % Care Leavers in EET (17-18 years old) is 45% - 55 out of 132 care leavers aged 17 and 18 are in EET
- % Care Leavers in EET (19-21 years old) is 43% - 126 out of 292 care leavers aged 19 to 21 are in EET
- % of Pathway plans up-to-date – 79% - 420 out of 532

- 4.2 In March 2024, 87% (773 out of 888) of children with a child in need plan, 95% (455 out of 469) of children subject to a child protection plan and 87% (762 out of 874) of children looked after were visited within the expected timescales. These percentages are slightly lower than at the end of January and will be monitored. Comparable data with other authorities is not available although informal information from neighbouring authorities suggests that around 90% of visits in timescales is good performance. 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 visits to the most vulnerable you people (e.g. those in unregistered placements who are seen weekly).
- 4.3 The frequency of visits to care experienced people is derived from the “in touch” reporting. However, because “in touch” reporting links visits to the collection of other data, it is not the same as a record of a visit or other contact with a care leaver. New reports are being trialled to monitor visits to care experienced people as part of an extensive “corporate parenting data set”. Early indications are that the frequency of contact with and visits to care experienced people is much higher than reported through “in touch” reporting.
- 4.4 The percentage of children looked after with 3 or more placements in the last 12 months was 14% in March 2024. This was a slight improvement on the previous month. It has been between 15% and 17% throughout the year and above the rates for comparators. Improvements in placements stability will be linked to the work being done to improve placement sufficiency and relationships with providers which has been the subject of a separate report to the IPB. Currently, placement stability within DCC foster care is better than the average; for children placed with IFAs, the same as the average and for children in residential care higher than the average.
- 4.5 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 were 15 under 16s in unregistered placements at the end of January 2024 out of a total of 17 – this is not a dissimilar rate to that of other LAs in the region. For most of the over 16s, plans are focussed on their transition to adulthood. By the end March, there were 12 under 16s in unregistered placements out of a total of 15. By the end of April, this had reduced to 11 out of a total of 13. Registered placements are being sought for all 13 children; there are plans for all but 4 of them to move into a registered placement by June 2024.
- 4.6 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 (97% - 791 out of 814) means that we are actively planning for our looked after children. Whilst there is still further work to be done, a new permanency tracker has improved the monitoring of the implementation of permanence plans.

- 4.7 Early permanence planning (as measured through children placed proactively for fostering for adoption) is good – by the end of 2023/24, we had 21 children placed in fostering for adoption placements, compared to 14 the same time last year.
- 4.8 Although not reported within this data set, there has been improved attendance at school for both children in need and children subject to a protection plan. The IPB may wish to request a report on the work of the Virtual School for a future meeting.
- 4.9 All looked after children should have an up-to-date health assessment. Currently, 77% of our looked after children have an up-to-date health assessment which is lower than comparators who average 90% completion rates. We have looked at the reasons for the delays on completing health assessments for the last three months of 2023. The most common reasons related to the young person's health, the proposed location of the assessment appointment and, to a lesser extent, availability of the health staff or lack of communication from the allocated social worker. The rates of health assessments for children placed outside of Devon are lower than those placed in county. Discussions have taken place between social care managers and health service colleagues to address the shortfall and the actions are now being implemented and the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting has discussed each of the children with an overdue health assessment with the Named Nurse for Children in Care and Care Leavers to ensure that their health assessments can be updated.
- 4.10 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 contact rate of 91% has been consistently in a range of 91 to 93% throughout the year; 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 accurate and detailed analysis.
- 4.11 Reporting on in-touch, suitable accommodation and EET is undertaken using the definitions used by Ofsted in the ILACS Annexe A definitions. This does not accurately reflect the work being undertaken with young people leaving care. Clarification has been sought from Ofsted on the evidence that they will accept for inspection purposes and consequently new reports are being developed. The new reports will exclude those young people for whom in touch data is not compiled i.e. those receiving an adult social care service

where their key worker is in adult services (at least 20) and qualifying young people who will seldom have a PA or social worker allocated to them. This will reduce the number of young people for whom the data is not recorded and therefore increase the percentage of young people recorded as being in touch, in suitable accommodation or in EET.

- 4.12 We also need to report on changes in circumstances. For example, whilst there are too many young people reported to be in unsuitable accommodation, they have not been the same young people over the course of the last 3 months. 28 young people have moved into suitable accommodation but have been replaced by others in new unsuitable arrangements. Improved reporting of the changes will provide the IPB with a better understanding of the work that is being undertaken. Currently, there are 18 care leavers known to be in unsuitable accommodation but that is not properly reflected in the performance data because of the way in which it is reported.
- 4.10 The new reports being developed as part of the corporate parenting data set will provide a better understanding of the work being undertaken to reduce the number of young people that are not in EET. Supported in another way to engage with ETE – DCC, YJS
- 4.11 At the end of March 2024, 79% of pathway plans for care leavers were up to date. This is lower than previously reported. A new pathway plan format has been developed in consultation with care leavers 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 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. In January 2024, all areas of the service were required to complete audits; from February 2024, Heads of Service and Deputy Directors will also be completing audits.
- 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%. By October, this had increased to 44% of audits including feedback from families. 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 who came into post in January 2024. Following the recent Ofsted monitoring visit, additional

capacity has been introduced into the audit team and it will now be possible to link a member of the audit team to each service area. This will enable coaching and support to be provided to managers in the completion of audits. An update on the quality assurance framework and audits is the subject of a separate report to the IPB.

5.3 Reporting on these measures is delayed because of the increase in the number of audits being undertaken. The IPB had a report on the overall quality assurance framework, including audits, at its April meeting.

6 Staffing

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

- Agency Rate % of QSW (FTE) against Permanent Establishment is 47%
- Average caseloads 16.75
- Supervisions overdue (15.1%) – 496 out of 3031 due

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 implementation of the reshape. The agency rate decreased slightly in November and has now reduced to 47% to date. 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 in the autumn of 2023. We had 8 “overseas” social workers due to join us in early 2024, 6 of whom have now started (but are not reflected in the January data) – the other 2 have been delayed due to issues with registering with Social Work England. A number of agency staff have now become permanent employees of the council. We have several apprentice social workers together with two teams of frontline social work trainees (four in each team). 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 have updated and relaunched our recruitment and retention strategy. A separate report on recruitment and retention will be presented to this meeting of the IPB.

- 6.3 Average caseloads are now just under 17 and vary between different service areas. The average takes account of the different expectations of staff according to their level of experience. Variations are a consequence of staff turnover. As we achieve greater stability within the social work teams, they are expected to reduce further.
- 6.4 The rate of overdue supervisions decreased to 14.6% in February and 15.1% in March. The measure is reporting on the completion of a supervision record for each child / young person within the month, i.e. of the 3031 children open to children's social care in March 2024, 496 of those did not have a supervision record attached. There was no differentiation in the expected level of supervision according to the needs or circumstances of the child. Revisions to the supervision policy were implemented in March 2024 which acknowledge that the frequency of supervision should vary according to the needs / circumstances of the child / young person as set out below. This 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).

Case type or service	Minimum frequency of case supervision
Family Early Help (FEH)	Bi monthly
Assessment (A&I and AAD)	Monthly
Child in need (CIN)	Bi monthly (high risk monthly)
Child protection (CP)	Monthly
Children in care (CLA)	Bi monthly (high risk monthly)
Care leavers	Quarterly (high risk monthly)
Foster carers	Bi monthly (Instability or concerns for quality of care monthly)
Youth Offending Services (YOS)	High risk – Monthly / Lower risk – Bi monthly
Quality Assurance	Quarterly and on a priority basis

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.