

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting13th March 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Children's Social Care Activity & Performance Report

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on Children's Social Care Activity and Performance.

In light of the Ofsted inspection of child protection in January 2013, it had been decided to review the content and format of future children's social care reports to Cabinet.

In addition to a range of measures to illustrate the pressures experienced by the service, a number of performance indicators was also included so that Cabinet could more closely monitor the impact of these pressures on performance and outcomes for children.

As a way of achieving this, the use of a 'process model' was approved by Cabinet on 13 June 2013.

Given the importance and profile of these issues it had been agreed that the new activity and performance reports be brought to Cabinet on a bimonthly basis i.e. every alternate Cabinet.

This report was based on the available data at the end of quarter 3 (31 December 2013).

This revised format for reporting to Cabinet attempted to show the range of key factors that impacted on the levels of activity, workload pressures and performance in children's social care.

The template data that was attached to the report was designed to illustrate the following key elements:

- Inputs

These measures record the flow of business into the social care system, the level / complexity of activity and the extent to which other agencies

were impacting on this activity. The key measures were as follows:-

- Number of contacts made with children's social care
- Number of contacts that become referrals for assessment
- Number of referrals by agency/number that do not meet social care threshold
- Referral reasons e.g. domestic violence, substance misuse
- Number of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) 2s by agency
- Number/proportion of contacts with an active CAF
- Number/proportion of contacts which are closed and logged
- Number/proportion of referrals resulting in no further action (NFA)

- Processes

These measures related to the efficiency and effectiveness of services in managing the business i.e. the way in which business was conducted to assess needs, make decisions about support required and keep cases under review. The key measures were as follows:-

- Number and timeliness of assessments
- Number and proportion of referrals that result in Section 47 (Child Protection) enquiries
- Number and timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs)
- Timeliness of Child Protection (CP) CP Reviews
- Attendance of children and young people at ICPCs and CP Reviews
- Attendance of children and young people at Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews
- Number/proportion of Care Applications to Court
- Number/proportion of LAC on Section 20 (voluntary accommodation) or Legal Orders
- Workforce composition

- Outputs

These indicators were proxies for how effective processes had been in delivering results, which in turn should lead to positive outcomes for the children and young people concerned. The key measures were as follows:-

- Numbers of children in need (CiN)/CP/LAC
- Re-referral rates
- Second or subsequent CP Plans
- CP plans 2 years+
- Number/proportion of those stepping down from CP Plan to CAF
- LAC Placement stability (number of placement moves both short and long term)
- Care leavers in Education Employment and Training (EET)
- Care leavers in suitable accommodation

- Numbers/proportion of children adopted or made subject to Special Guardianship Order (SGO)/Residence Order or returned home

Appendix 1 to the report gave a summary of the available data at the end of quarter 3 (31 December 2013), along with a brief commentary highlighting the main issues raised from analysis of the information.

Appendix 2 to the report gave the data which informed the report.

In summary, the overall picture reflected in the attached analysis was as follows:-

- Inputs – a continuing high level of demand on services, but with some levelling off in volume of contacts and referrals compared to the previous year.
- Processes - continuing pressures on timeliness of assessment and child protection processes, with an adverse impact on performance levels.
- Outputs - overall sound results, suggesting that, despite high caseloads, support provided for children requiring social care intervention continues to be largely effective, although there are some challenges for care leavers.

Performance continued to be monitored very closely via the monthly Children's Social Care Performance Clinic chaired by the Corporate Director and attended by the Head of Service and all senior managers with responsibility for children's social care. This meeting analyses a range of performance and activity data and agrees and monitors actions in response to any identified issues. This was underpinned by a range of performance clinics with operational managers across the service.

In addition there was a fortnightly Workload Pressures meeting chaired by the Corporate Director and attended by the Head of Service and key senior managers in children's social care. This meeting closely monitors staffing and allocation issues and any associated pressures across the service.

Due to continuing concerns about inappropriate referrals to children's social care and the low take up of the common assessment framework (CAF) by partner agencies, a revised referral protocol was approved by Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB). Under this protocol, no referrals were accepted by children's social care without prior evidence of CAF activity, unless there were immediate child protection concerns. This was implemented on 4 November 2013.

An update report was taken to SLSCB on 16 January 2014 based on the

position at 20 December 2013. Up to this date, 24 referrals were returned to partner agencies as inappropriate.

These could be broken down as follows:-

Police	17
Housing	2
NTHFT	2
Schools	2
Probation	1

Due to the high number of inappropriate referrals from the police, discussions had taken place on a Tees wide basis and it had been agreed to develop a consistent pathway for police to raise issues which did not meet the threshold for children's social care intervention.

The 'critical friend' review of decision making and processes in relation to the child protection system was undertaken by colleagues from Northumberland Council from 21 to 23 January 2014. The findings from this review aimed to provide an objective evaluation of some key lines of enquiry identified by CESC Senior Management Team. Some of the key findings were:-

- A committed and motivated workforce who understood their role and function.
- Staff spoke highly of Stockton.
- Staff spoke of very good management support and a discernible improvement in this area over the last 12 months
- Duty workers indicated their workloads are manageable.
- Staff interviewed indicated a willingness to improve practice and appeared to exhibit a good level self-awareness.

The review made a number of recommendations to CESC and LSCB following their review which included:-

1. identifying and developing a risk assessment model and framework
2. developing the role of the reviewing service
3. reviewing how CP meetings are undertaken and who attends

them

4. reviewing some of the documentation currently used by CESC and partners at CP meetings

The report had been to the LSCB and an action plan was being developed.

As indicated previously, a peer review of safeguarding would take place in the week commencing 24 March 2014. This three day diagnostic would be undertaken by a team of experienced peer reviewers from other Local Authorities and would be focused on social work practice and decision making in the newly formed Assessment Teams and longer term intervention in cases involving domestic violence and neglect. This would enable the Council to test out the impact and progress of actions implemented in response to the Ofsted inspection of child protection in January 2013.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The continued workload pressures and associated activity in the children's social care system and the consequent impact this is having on both performance and budget be noted.
2. Further update reports be received on a bi monthly basis in order to continue to monitor children's social care activity and performance.

3. Reasons for the Decision

There are significant and continuing pressures in the children's social care system which could potentially impact on the Council's ability to effectively safeguard children, fulfil statutory duties and remain within allocated budget.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday, 21st March 2014

Proper Officer
17 March 2014