

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

1 SEPTEMBER 2016

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs McCoy

SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE

1. Summary

This report provides Cabinet with an update on activity and performance and any associated workload pressures in relation to the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service.

The report will also highlight any national changes in legislation, policy and guidance which are likely to have an impact on services within Stockton-on-Tees.

This report is based on the available data at the end of quarter 1 (30 June 2016).

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the current activity and performance within the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service and impact of workload pressures.
2. Receive further update reports on a quarterly basis in order to continue to monitor activity and performance.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The welfare of children and outcomes for looked after children are key council priorities and ongoing workload pressures could potentially impact on the council's ability to effectively safeguard children, fulfil statutory duties and remain within allocated budget.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Note the current activity and performance within the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service and impact of workload pressures.
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DETAIL

Background

1. This revised and simplified format for reporting to Cabinet focuses on activity and performance within the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service, which was established as part of the new structure arising from the children's services review which became operational on 1 September 2015.
2. The report will focus on performance against a small number of key performance indicators.
3. In addition, the report will draw on a range of qualitative information in order to provide cabinet with a more rounded view of activity and performance within the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service.
4. Finally, the report will highlight any key national changes in legislation, policy and guidance which are likely to have an impact on services to children and families in Stockton-on-Tees.

Performance Update

5. As illustrated by table 1, single assessments continue to be completed in a timely manner, with performance at the end of quarter 1 exceeding the target set for 2016/17. This is particularly impressive given the unprecedented volume of referrals being received during this period.

Table 1: Assessment of need is completed in a timely manner

Performance Measures		2016/17			2015/16	
		Target Bands	Jun	Short Trend	Target	Value (Provisional)
Timeliness of Single Assessments	YD	Green: >=95% Amber: 90% - 94% Red: <= 89%	99.1%	↑	95.0%	98.8%

6. Activity in the child protection (CP) system continues to increase, with 302 children being subject to CP plans at the end of quarter 1.
7. As can be seen by table 2, the overwhelming majority of CP conferences and reviews take place within timescales and there has been a reduction in the number of children becoming subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time.
8. The number of CP plans lasting over two years remains high, which is an area of potential concern. All cases continue to be tracked through the Children's Social Care Performance Clinic which is chaired by the Director of Children's Services.

Table 2: Commitment to safeguard children from abuse and neglect is reflected in the support they receive

Performance Measures		2016/17			2015/16	
		Target Bands	Jun	Short Trend	Target	Value (Provisional)
Percentage of CPPs lasting 2 years or more	YD	Green: 0% - 2% Amber: 3% - 4% Red: >= 5%	4.1%	↑	0-2%	9.1%
Percentage of children becoming the subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time (within 24 months)	YD	Green: 0% - 8% Amber: 9% - 12% Red: >= 13%	4.2%	↑	0-8%	6.1%
Percentage of Child Protection Cases which were reviewed with required timescales	RY	Green: 98%+ Amber: 95% - 97% Red: <= 94%	98.6%	↓	>= 98%	99.5%
Timeliness of ICPCs (15 Working Days)	YD	Green: 85%+ Amber: 75% - 84% Red: <= 75%	91.5%	↓	85%	93.9%

9. At the end of quarter 1 there were 411 looked after children (LAC), which represents a significant increase since 31 March 2016, when the figure was 377. This rise reflects the overall increase in referrals being received.
10. As evident from table 3, a high proportion of LAC reviews continue to take place within statutory timescales and performance in relation to placement stability is currently exceeding targets set for 2016/17.
11. Adoption performance is within target range at the end of the quarter, although it should be noted that due to the very small numbers involved this could change significantly as the year progresses. Whilst it is important to avoid delay, our priority will continue to be to identify appropriate matches for any children requiring an adoptive placement in order to minimise the possibility of placement breakdown. The reasons for any delay continue to be monitored by the Children's Social Care Performance Clinic.

Table 3: Avoid unnecessary and disruptive placement moves for looked after children

Performance Measures		2016/17			2015/16	
		Target Bands	Jun	Short Trend	Target	Value (Provisional)
Children in Care cases which were reviewed within required timescales	RY	Green: 95%+ Amber: 91% - 94% Red: <= 90%	96.6%	↑	>= 95%	93.4%
Short-term stability of placements of looked after children: number of placements	YD	Green: 0% - 9% Amber: 10% - 12% Red: >= 13%	0.5%	↑	0-9%	9.4%
Longer term stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement	EP	Green: >= 65% Amber: 60% - 64% Red: <=59%	70.8%	↑	>= 60%	69.4%
Timeliness of placements of Children in Care for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption	Q	Green: 70%+ Amber: 66% - 69% Red: <= 65%	100%	↑	>= 70%	50.0%
Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted during the period - A1 indicator	Q	Green: <=593 Red: >593	560	↑	547 2011-14 National Threshold	675
Average Time (in days) between a Local Authority receiving Court Authority to Place a Child and the Local Authority deciding on a Match to an Adoptive Family - A2 indicator	Q	Green: <=223 Red: >223	109	↑	152 2011-14 National Threshold	361

12. Offending by looked after children remains low and within target range as demonstrated by table 4.
13. Performance in relation to the health of looked after children, which is measured through the timeliness of health and dental checks, has dipped and this is an area of concern currently. This issue has been picked up by the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) which is chaired by the Assistant Director, Early Help, Partnership and Planning and is currently being discussed with health colleagues. An update on the outcome of this work will be included in a future report to Cabinet.

Table 4: Outcomes for looked after children

Performance Measures		2016/17			2015/16	
		Target Bands	Jun	Short Trend	Target	Value (Provisional)
Percentage of Children in Care who have offended whilst in Care.	Y D	Green: <=5% Red: >=6%	1.2%	↑	5%	7.3%
Health of CiC	R Y	Green: 90%+ Amber: 80% - 89% Red: <= 80%	78.7%	↓	90%	81.3%

14. As reflected in table 5, outcomes for care leavers are currently not projected to meet target levels.
15. Care leavers continue to be supported into suitable accommodation wherever possible. Unfortunately a small number of our care leavers are in custody, which is categorised as unsuitable accommodation. In addition, when there is no suitable alternative accommodation available, care leavers are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation on a short term basis as a last resort, which would also be categorised as unsuitable accommodation. The council is currently seeking to expand the range of accommodation provision available in order to better meet the needs of care leavers within the borough. This was the subject of a report to Cabinet on 14 July 2016.
16. A detailed analysis has been undertaken in relation to care leavers not currently in education, employment or training (EET) in order to gain a greater understanding of the individual needs of the young people and to direct support and resources accordingly.
17. This analysis indicates that young people are leaving school and progressing into EET but are then dropping out or completing courses without further progression. MALAP has established a working group to address this issue by creating opportunities within the council and other local employers specifically targeted at care leavers.

Table 5: Care leavers are supported into suitable housing and employment or training

Performance Measures		2016/17			2015/16	
		Target Bands	Jun	Short Trend	Target	Value (Provisional)
Number / proportion of children and young people placed in suitable accommodation (16-21 year olds)	Q	Green: 95%+ Amber: 85% - 94% Red: <= 85%	88.9%	↓	95%	92.7%
Number / proportion of care leavers in EET (16-21 year olds)	Q	Green: 55%+ Amber: 50% - 54% Red: <= 49%	50.0%	↓	55%	51.6%

Child Sexual Exploitation

18. Following the Task and Finish Review of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), it has been agreed to provide an update on activity within the Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) arrangements.
19. There were 34 children considered under VEMT arrangements in Stockton-on-Tees during quarter 1. Of these, 29 were female and 5 were male and 26 were considered to be at potential risk of CSE. Of the 26, 15 were assessed as high risk, 7 medium risk and 4 low risk.
20. At the end of the quarter, there were 22 children subject to VEMT arrangements.
21. There were two disclosures of CSE made by children during the quarter.

Team Health Checks

22. During 2015/16, a programme of annual team health checks was introduced in order to assess the performance of individual teams. All the available performance information, broken down to individual team level, is collated and used as the basis for an assessment undertaken by the Director of Children's Services and Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Looked After Children.
23. Each team is graded according to the assessment criteria used by Ofsted. Where a team is graded as good or outstanding, it has been agreed the team will not be reassessed until the following year, whereas where a team is graded as inadequate or requires improvement, the team will be reassessed after 6 months in order to measure progress.
24. To date, team health checks have been undertaken in relation to the six Fieldwork Teams with three currently being graded as good and three requires improvement and the Complex Needs Social Work Team which is currently graded as requires improvement.
25. The team health checks have been generally well received by staff and have brought about a greater understanding of the performance agenda and have also enabled a sharper focus on the priority areas for improvement within each team.
26. The team health checks will now be rolled out to all children's social care teams, with the Assessment and Permanence Teams next in line to be assessed.

Case File Audits

27. Case file audits continue to be a key element of the overall quality assurance framework within children's services in order to monitor the quality of social work practice and the impact on outcomes for children and families within the borough.
28. A regular programme of case file audits is undertaken on a monthly basis by managers working in pairs. In addition to randomly selected audits, a number of themed audits are undertaken on focusing on specific issues or teams.
29. Each case file audit is given a grade using the Ofsted judgement criteria (outstanding, good, requires improvement, inadequate). A quarterly report is prepared based on all the case file audits undertaken within that quarter and presented to the Children and Young People's Management Team (CYPMT). The report identifies themes arising from the audits for further consideration and action.

30. The most recent available analysis is for 2015/16 quarter 4 ie 1 January to 31 March 2016. Of the 30 audits completed during the quarter:
- 18 had an overall judgement of 'Good' – 60% (59% in Q1; 39% in Q2; 32% in Q3)
 - 11 had an overall judgement of 'Requires Improvement' – 37% (37% in Q1; 54% in Q2; 65% in Q3)
 - 1 had an overall judgement of 'Inadequate' – 3% (4% in Q1; 7% in Q2; 3% in Q3)

Recruitment and Retention

31. The recruitment and retention of qualified social workers continues to be a challenge, which is exacerbated by the loss of existing staff to recruitment agencies offering high payment rates in other local authorities in the region, particularly those who have been subject to inadequate judgements by Ofsted.
32. At the end of the quarter there were 11 social work vacancies within the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service.
33. There are ongoing attempts to recruit additional social workers, utilising some of the recently agreed initiatives including:
- Increased 'golden hello' for experienced staff.
 - 'Recommend a friend' scheme.
 - Retention payment for existing staff in 'hard to fill' posts.
 - Overtime payments.
34. Agency staff are employed as an interim measure in order to cover vacancies, maternity and sickness absence. It should be noted that agency staff are only ever used as a last resort in order to ensure the provision of a safe service due to the variable quality of staff and costs involved. At the end of the quarter there were 15 agency staff employed on a temporary basis within the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service.
35. The number of unallocated cases continues to be closely monitored by the fortnightly Workload Pressures meeting chaired by the Director of Children's Services and attended by the Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Looked After Children and key senior managers across children's social care. At the end of the quarter, there were no unallocated cases.

Children's Hub

36. The Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub was successfully launched on 1 June 2016 and now operates as the 'front door' for all referrals to children's social care in the borough.
37. Although there some initial teething issues, particularly in relation to IT, the early indications are generally positive, with a recent reduction in the number of referrals and improvement in the quality of the information being passed through to the Assessment Team.
38. The Senior Management Board (SMB) continues to meet to monitor progress and will receive detailed performance reports in due course.
39. A fuller briefing on the progress of the Children's Hub will be provided to a future Cabinet meeting.

Children's Homes

40. At the end of the quarter, of the six children's homes operated by the council, three were judged to be good and three judged to be outstanding by Ofsted.

Social Work Reform

41. On 14 January 2016, Nicky Morgan, Secretary of State announced the government's programme for social work reform. The proposals include the following initiatives:
- A new regulatory body to replace the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).
 - The introduction of a new 'What Works Centre'.
 - The development of a practice leader development programme.
 - The roll out of an assessment and accreditation programme for social workers.
42. The government has also published 'Children's Social Care Reform: A Vision for Change', which comprises three key elements:
- **People and leadership** – bringing the best people into the profession and ensuring they have the right knowledge and skills.
 - **Practice and systems** – creating the right environment for excellent practice and innovation.
 - **Leadership and governance** – using data to identify strengths and weaknesses in the system and developing innovative new organisational models.
43. By 2020, the government's vision is for an improved workforce at all levels, a more diverse range of children's social care organisations operating across new geographical boundaries and an inspection regime which supports high quality evidence based practice.
44. It is not yet clear what impact, if any, the recent changes in government will have on these proposals.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

45. Safeguarding of children is a key component of the children and young people theme in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Improving outcomes for children through effective service delivery will impact on their potential quality of life in adulthood.
46. The effective safeguarding of children and support to looked after children will also have significant impact on the community safety agenda.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

47. As a result of workload pressures, there is continued pressure on the Children's Services Directorate budget in a number of key areas.
48. Firstly the independent fostering agency budget, which is set at £4.42m for 2016/17. The current projected outturn is £4.0m, which includes an element of growth, and therefore at present there is a projected saving of £420k.
49. Secondly the children's homes agency placements budget, which is set at £5.293m for 2016/17. Based on the current number of placements (46), plus estimated growth, the projected outturn is £6.409m ie an overspend of £1.116m.

50. Thirdly the social work staffing budget, which is set at £6.3m for 2016/17. The current projected outturn is £6.45m ie an overspend of £150k, largely as a result of the cost of employing agency staff to cover staffing vacancies and absence. As in previous years, this will be offset by the use of managed surplus.

51. These issues continue to be considered through the medium term financial plan (MTFP).

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

52. Workload pressures relating to the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service have resulted in a corresponding increase in the numbers of children subject to care proceedings. This in turn has placed a significant additional burden on Legal Services. Additional resources have been made available in order to respond to this, although this continues to be monitored closely.

RISK ASSESSMENT

53. The children's services risk register is currently in the process of being updated and full details will be incorporated into future reports to Cabinet.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

54. This report contributes to the following policy principles in the council plan:

- Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention - services to safeguard children are specifically targeted at those identified as being in need of protection.
- Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention - services to safeguard children and services to support looked after children are provided in order to ensure children are not disadvantaged as a result of their start in life by improving their outcomes so that they can go on to achieve their full potential.
- Developing strong and healthy communities - improving outcomes for children through effective service delivery will impact on their potential quality of life in adulthood, thereby supporting the development of healthy communities.
- Creating economic prosperity - services to safeguard children and services to support looked after children are provided in order to improve outcomes for children so that they can achieve their full potential and make a positive contribution to the local economy.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

55. For those children who are looked after, the council has a responsibility as corporate parent to ensure that their needs are appropriately met.

56. This report assists cabinet in fulfilling its responsibility as corporate parent by maintaining an overview of activity and performance in relation to looked after children and monitoring the impact of workload pressures.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

57. No consultation has taken place in relation to this issue at this stage.

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Education related? No

Background Papers

Not applicable.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors

Not applicable.

Property

There are no implications for council property.