

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

1 DECEMBER 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 2 (30 September 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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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 2 (30 September 2016).

RECOMMENDATIONS

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.

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 2 continuing to exceed the target set for 2016/17.

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

Performance Measures		2016/17			2015/16	
		Target Bands	Sep	Short Trend	Target	Value (Provisional)
Timeliness of Single Assessments	YD	Green: >=95% Amber: 90% - 94% Red: <= 89%	96.6%	↑	95.0%	98.8%

6. Activity in the child protection (CP) system remains high, with 300 children subject to CP plans at the end of quarter 2.
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. Although performance has improved, 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	Sep	Short Trend	Target	Value (Provisional)
Percentage of CPPs lasting 2 years or more	YD	Green: 0% - 2% Amber: 3% - 4% Red: >= 5%	2.7%	↑	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%	7.6%	↑	0-8%	6.1%
Percentage of Child Protection Cases which were reviewed with required timescales	RY	Green: 98%+ Amber: 95% - 97% Red: <= 94%	98.3%	↑	>= 98%	99.5%
Timeliness of ICPCs (15 Working Days)	YD	Green: 85%+ Amber: 75% - 84% Red: <= 75%	92.2%	↑	85%	93.9%

9. At the end of quarter 2 there were 401 looked after children (LAC). Although the number remains high, it represents a slight decline since 30 June 2016, when the figure was 409. This reflects the high level of referrals 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 continues to exceed the target set for 2016/17.
11. Adoption performance is outside the target range at the end of the quarter. Due to the very small numbers involved this can 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. It should also be noted that during the recent Ofsted inspection, inspectors were satisfied with the decision making in relation to all the adoption cases they looked at.

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

Performance Measures		2016/17			2015/16	
		Target Bands	Sep	Short Trend	Target	Value (Provisional)
Children in Care cases which were reviewed within required timescales	RY	Green: 95%+ Amber: 91% - 94% Red: <= 90%	96.7%	↓	>= 95%	93.4%
Short-term stability of placements of looked after children: number of placements	YD	Green: 0% - 9% Amber: 10% - 12% Red: >= 13%	4.2%	↓	0-9%	9.4%
Longer term stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement	EP	Green: >= 65% Amber: 60% - 64% Red: <=59%	75.9%	↑	>= 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%	100.0%	↔	>= 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	589	↓	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	169	↓	152 2011-14 National Threshold	361

12. As demonstrated by table 4, offending by looked after children has increased during the quarter, although performance remains within target range. This is closely monitored by the Children's Social Care Performance Clinic in order to look for any emerging themes or trends. It should be noted that a significant proportion of these offences were committed by children living outside the borough.
13. Performance in relation to the health of looked after children, which is measured through the timeliness of health and dental checks remains slightly below the target for 2016/17 and this is currently being addressed by the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) which is chaired by the Assistant Director, Early Help, Partnership and Planning. 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		Target Bands	Sep	Short Trend	2015/16	
					Target	Value (Provisional)
Percentage of Children in Care who have offended whilst in Care.	YD	Green: <=5% Red: >=6%	3.4%	↓	5%	7.3%
Health of CiC	RY	Green: 90%+ Amber: 80% - 89% Red: <= 79%	80.0%	↑	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. The number of care leavers in custody has increased which has impacted negatively on performance. 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. The number of care leavers not currently in education, employment or training (EET) has increased during the quarter. Analysis undertaken by Youth Direction indicates that young people are leaving school and progressing into EET but are then dropping out or completing courses without further progression. Work is ongoing by MALAP 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			2015/16	
		Target Bands	Sep	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%	89.9%	↑	95%	92.7%
Number / proportion of care leavers in EET (16-21 year olds)	Q	Green: 55%+ Amber: 50% - 54% Red: <= 49%	43.5%	↓	55%	51.6%

Child Sexual Exploitation

17. 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.
18. There were 36 children considered under VEMT arrangements in Stockton-on-Tees during quarter 2. Of these, 27 were female and 9 were male and 20 were considered to be at potential risk of CSE. Of the 20, 17 were assessed as high risk and 3 medium risk.
19. At the end of the quarter, there were 29 children subject to VEMT arrangements.
20. There were no disclosures of CSE made by children during the quarter.

Team Health Checks

21. 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.
22. Each team is graded according to the assessment criteria used by Ofsted (outstanding, good, requires improvement, inadequate). 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.
23. Since the last report to Cabinet, team health checks have been undertaken in relation to the two Assessment teams, both of which were graded as good.
24. The other team health checks undertaken to date are as follows:
Fieldwork Teams - three good and three requires improvement
Disabled Children Social Work Team - 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. Further team health checks are planned for the two Permanence Teams and Leaving |Care Team during quarter 3.

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. 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 2016/17 quarter 1 ie 1 April to 30 June 2016. Of the 26 audits completed during the quarter:
- 1 was judged to be 'outstanding' – 4%
(this is the first audit judged to be 'outstanding')
 - 15 had an overall judgement of 'good' – 58%
(59% in Q1; 39% in Q2; 32% in Q3; 60% in Q4)
 - 9 had an overall judgement of 'requires improvement' – 34%
(37% in Q1; 54% in Q2; 65% in Q3; 37% in Q4)
 - 1 had an overall judgement of 'inadequate' – 4%
(4% in Q1; 7% in Q2; 3% in Q3; 3% in Q4)

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 15.5 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. Alongside this we continue to consider new and innovative ways of recruiting and retaining social work staff and are currently in the process of developing a social media based recruitment campaign to be launched later this year.
35. 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.
36. 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

37. 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.
38. The early indications remain generally positive, with a reduction in the number of referrals and improvement in the quality of the information being passed through to the Assessment Team.
39. The Senior Management Board (SMB) continues to meet to monitor progress and is due to receive the first detailed performance report later this year.

40. A fuller briefing on the progress of the Children's Hub will be provided to a future Cabinet meeting.

Children's Homes

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

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

42. 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.
43. The effective safeguarding of children and support to looked after children will also have significant impact on the community safety agenda.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

44. These pressures have continued to have an impact on the Children's Services Directorate budget in a number of key areas as follows.
45. Firstly the independent fostering agency budget, which is set at £4.424m for 2016/17. The current projected outturn is £3.785m, which includes an element of growth, therefore at present there is an anticipated saving of £639k.
46. Secondly the children's homes agency placements budget, which is set at £5.293m for 2016/17. Based on the current number of placements (55), plus estimated growth, the projected outturn is £7.711m ie an overspend of £2.418m.
47. Thirdly the social work staffing budget, which is set at £6.5m for 2016/17. The current projected outturn is £6.57m ie an overspend of £70k, largely as a result of the cost of employing agency staff to cover staffing vacancies and absence.
48. These issues continue to be considered and addressed through the Council's managed approach to the medium term financial plan (MTFP). In year these pressures will be managed by offsetting variances elsewhere in the council budget and by use of balances.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

49. 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

50. 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

51. 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

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

53. 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

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

Name of Contact Officer: Jane Humphreys
Post Title: Director of Children's Services
Telephone No: 01642 527053
Email Address: jane.humphreys@stockton.gov.uk

Education related? No

Background Papers

Not applicable.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors

Not applicable.

Property

There are no implications for council property.