

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

26 APRIL 2016

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

FRONT LINE VISITS – FOLLOW UP

Purpose

1. This report summarises the main feedback from the recent series of front line visits, outlines actions taken or proposed as a result, and reports on how this forms part of the newly developing Continuous Improvement Framework being developed for Children's Services.

Recommendations

2. The Committee is asked to
 - a. note the report
 - b. Comment further on any key messages and outcomes.

Background

3. Front line visits by members form part of the approach to performance management for Children's services. They sit within wider context of the quality assurance element of the new Continuous Improvement Framework.
4. Visits provide an opportunity for members to understand front line practice and pressures, meet practitioners, demonstrate the Council's commitment to these areas of operational activity, as well as to identify areas for potential improvement.

The visits

5. The schedule of visits is detailed overleaf along with detailed comments and responses.
6. Members are given guidance look out for the following issues when undertaking visits:
 - Staff – Morale, workload, staff concerns, how well staff are working together, are skills being used correctly, their ideas for service improvement
 - Business Processes – Are these efficient; is there evidence of duplication, delays, bottlenecks

- Resources – the working environment, do staff have the right equipment and support to carry out their role
- Multi-Agency Working – how well are agencies working together and sharing information
- Quality of Service – How is this measured?, what does customer feedback tell us?, how does the service listen to the voice of the child

Summary of key messages and outcomes

7. Members and teams continue to benefit from the visits. Members have seen at first hand the work done by teams, and their decision making processes often in the face of increasing demand.
8. Teams benefit from the visits and appreciate the opportunity to showcase and demonstrate their work. Our teams are rightly very proud of their work and achievements. They feel valued by the Council and appreciate the interest shown by Members in the visits.
9. Teams always remain open to suggestions for improvement, as part of our commitment to Continuous Improvement.
10. The visits have identified some issues which will be considered by Management Teams:
 - a. The effectiveness of process, with some areas of duplication and uncertainty over paperwork and process. This area is being addressed through the S-WORK project which is a whole systems change project focusing on children's social care, including the opportunity for LEAN reviews which also tackle bureaucracy and process.
 - b. The continuing demand pressure on social care staff – the recruitment and retention of social care staff forms part of S-WORK.

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Team / Service	Cllrs	Date	Summary	Key recommendations	Progress / actions
Operational Delivery Group (ODG)	Walmsley	21/09/16	<p>Rigorous follow up on actions from the last meeting</p> <p>Discussed Fostering & Adoption Services rebranding and CMAP Referral Form which is to be used in all cases going forward.</p> <p>There was extensive discussion regarding the trial to be undertaken regarding use of tablets/lphones which can be used when out of office; i.e. attending Court or when travelling by train to meet clients out of area. A mix of people will be chosen to trial the equipment including some who do not consider they are 'IT savvy' to ensure that any problems can be ironed out. This should greatly increase productivity and cut down paperwork. Eventually if the trial is successful it is hoped it will be rolled out to replace all desktops. It was generally felt that this would be a great improvement and a positive development for change.</p> <p>There was also discussion regarding recruitment issues and the benefits of permanent employment with SBC as opposed to Agency Work.</p>	A very positive visit to dedicated professionals who enjoy working for SBC and consider themselves well supported by their peers & managers	
Scrutiny and Resources Panel	Hampton	26/09/16	<p>The range of issues and cases presented to the panel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Referral for placement ➤ Child subject to an Interim Care Order and placed with parent ➤ Request from mother that her son (11yrs) be accommodated short term in a residential setting ➤ Retrospective decision to accommodate 2 children ➤ Special Guardianship Order ➤ Request for financial support in respect of a Special Guardianship Order, Interim Care Order is being sought ➤ Request for Special Guardianship Financial Support ➤ Request for Special Guardianship Financial Support <p>The panel recommended that Team Meetings be</p>	I was very impressed with the level of scrutiny and the range of issues brought before the panel and I have no recommendations.	

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			reminded of the entitlement in respect of family and friends placements as this issue was raised more than once during the presentations to the panel.		
Complex needs strategy meeting	Inman	27/09/16	Lack of care, poor parenting skills, the state of the home environment and over dependence on Interserve. It was felt that things had deteriorated since the care package had been reduced. It was felt that the parents had become reliant on the care package and there were grave concerns about what happens in the home when there were no carers present.	School attendance was good, children appeared happy at school and immunisations were up to date. The SW reported that the parents appeared to listen to advice and act on it for a while but were unable to sustain an appropriate level of care.	
Complex needs strategy meeting	Watson	27/09/16	<p>Each of the professionals was asked in turn for their concerns. These included the parents being over reliant on Interserve, not being honest and exaggerating the health needs of the child with complex needs in order to keep the care package. The carers were being used to do household chores rather than focusing on the child. There were concerns regarding safety, hygiene and hunger.</p> <p>The professionals from the children`s schools were more positive and said that the children had settled well and had good attendance so far. Immunisations were up to date. Each professional was asked to rate their satisfaction with the case on a scale 0-10 (satisfied). The results ranged from 1 to 4.</p>	Feedback noted thought it was good that the whole family were taken into consideration throughout the discussions and the recognition that there was a need for motivation to change permanently. Although the parents listened initially there had been no sustained improvement in 4 years. Child Protection Plans were discussed.	
Youth Offending Team	Walmsley	11/10/16	<p>Considered health, drugs, speech & language and mental health issues and referral routes. The main focus is to try to deal with problems before they reach a formal justice stage and the use of Out of Court Disposals to try to stop problems escalating.</p> <p>The team is multi-agency consisting of Social Workers, Education, Police, Probation & Public Health. Workload is purely dependant on what comes through the system and cannot be predicted or planned which means that there can be intense pressure at times of high demand. At such</p>	<p>It is vital that the closer working relationships and multi-agency co-operation continues and indeed grows. SBC need to ensure that these are not diluted by cost savings.</p> <p>The VEMT process in particular has produced good results.</p>	A future visit to a Referral Order Panel meeting or a Court hearing would be beneficial so that the whole process can be considered.

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			<p>times a risk assessment is vital to prioritise casework. They have recently developed an "Asset Plus" system and had extensive diagrams and flow charts on the walls to help manage the workload.</p> <p>CAMHS workers try to find the cause of offending by early intervention. Great importance is placed on viewing "the whole picture" and the team endeavour to work with the whole family. The Restorative Justice programme is producing good outcomes for both the offenders and the victims. Early intervention with Health is also producing good outcomes and has been able to pinpoint previously undiagnosed problems such as FASD and malnutrition.</p> <p>Examined the court process where the team try to influence sentencing to produce the best result. This cuts down timescales as they are able to give reports and answer any questions on the day so that cases do not have to be adjourned. Prioritisation is a big challenge and that the welfare of the young person has to be balanced against the risk to the greater community. Deadline pressures are intense and they have to work to many different deadlines for many different agencies.</p>		
Service Managers Operational Group	Povey	21/10/16	<p>Many vacancies in the service that they are struggling to fill. They are struggling to allocate new cases. They have employed many newly qualified social workers but they can't afford to employ anymore because they have a limited casework. They are also struggling to fill more senior positions.</p> <p>The First Contact office has been ceased and staff raised many questions over who should receive certain information and respond to questions.</p> <p>There have been many freedom of information requests and this is taking up a lot of staff time, although they were interviewing for an officer whose role would include this</p>	<p>The senior management team worked well together and communicated with each other about issues facing each of their teams but ideas to fill vacancies seemed to have been exhausted.</p> <p>The Council does not always get timely information on other authorities placing Looked After Children in Stockton.</p>	Raise issues of protocols at regional meetings
PLO Panel	Inman	11/10/16	Key observations were that this was a group of professionals working together to do their very best for	No specific recommendations	

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<i>PLO panel is a quality assurance process for cases which will be presented to court to initiative court proceedings.</i>			the children in our care. They were looking at the quality of court statements, quality of decision making, assessment(s) completed, timescales, court decisions met, resources, issues identified and plans agreed.	Cllr Inman recorded the diligence of the service managers, now they put social workers at their ease when presenting cases	
Youth Offending Team	Watson	11/10/16	It is a challenge to establish a working relationship, rather than a friendship, with the young people with clear boundaries and trust. There is an increase in sexual offences via the internet and sharing images. National Standards mean they have 15 days to produce an assessment plan and they must see the Young Person a certain number of times.	One of the main challenges is prioritising work to ensure safeguarding and reduce risk.	It would be very interesting to take up the offer of observing the out of Court panel.
Scrutiny	Povey	21/10/16	Social workers have to deal with a wide range of very different cases. Social workers have been given new templates and forms to fill in. Some used the old templates and filled the forms out incorrectly. A lot of money was spent financing special guardianship orders.	Suitable placements are not always available within the borough and may be difficult to find elsewhere. Waiting for the right placement to become available could be detrimental to the child.	Better communication regarding which forms social workers should be using and more training on how to fill them in correctly which could save a lot of time. It would be interesting to find out the safeguards in place to protect children who are waiting for a suitable placement.
Children Multi Agency Panel	Clark	16/09/16 20/10/16 17/11/16	This group meets monthly where cases and updates are discussed with officers concerned. One of the aspects was the cost to move the young people out of area and long this would last and so the	It was interesting to attend the three meeting as the updates gave an interesting background and observers could see	

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			<p>finance officer took part in the meeting to discuss costs to Stockton Borough Council. Each new case was discussed fully within the committee and then updates were provided regarding young people who had been moved from the area.</p> <p>People involved in the meetings included Jane Humphreys, Martin Gray, Diane McConnell, LAC Manager, Virtual Head Teacher, Finance Officer, Social workers, CAMHS.</p>	developments over time.	
Supported Accommodation Panel	Clark	21/09/16 02/11/16	<p>This group meets every three weeks and discusses updates from accommodations. Staff from the Resources Department attended and also officers from various supported accommodations including Parkfields, Campus, Sanctuary, Fairways. Also attending was YOT, Youth Direction.</p> <p>One of the key questions was what happens post 21 to young people on their journey through life after supported accommodation? We don't have enough information. More supported accommodation is always needed.</p>	Staff from both of these committees were very welcoming and helpful and happy to answer any questions. I would like to commend their work and thank them for allowing me to visit.	Further visits to update on progress.