

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council – Corporate Parenting Panel

1.	Meeting:	Corporate Parenting Panel
2.	Date:	20th July, 2015
3.	Title:	Performance Report - Looked After Children - May 2015
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

- 5.1 This report provides an update on the performance of services for Looked After Children (LAC) as at 31st May, 2015. This report should be considered alongside the data report attached.
- 5.2 The current data within the attached report is a subset of the latest Safeguarding Children and Families Monthly Performance Report. This is currently being further developed and refined in consultation with Michelle Whiting and in conjunction with Performance Board requirements.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 **That the Panel consider the detail provided in the Performance report and note that further work is taking place to develop a Corporate Parenting Dashboard which will be presented quarterly to the Corporate Parenting Panel.**
- 6.2 **That the Panel advise on any specific areas that they would like to be included in future Performance Reports.**

7. Proposals and Details

- 7.1 In January 2015, Commissioner Newsam established the weekly CYPS Performance Board. Although Looked After Children were included, the initial focus of this group was to review and improve key 'Safeguarding' services for children. This has had significant impact on previous areas of weakness including caseload management, timeliness of assessments, up-to-date plans and visits.

From July 2015, the Performance Board continues to meet on a weekly basis but alternates in focus between "CIN/CP/Safeguarding" and "LAC". Attendance has also been extended to include relevant Team Managers for the focus area, to further promote engagement and ownership of performance management, and improvement at all levels of the organisation.

"LAC" meetings will include Care Leavers, Fostering, Adoption, LAC Outcomes and Placements.

Future Corporate Parenting Performance Reports will reflect the key measures identified through the Performance Board, and data and reporting developments have already commenced. It is envisaged that LAC services and outcomes will see similar improvement patterns to those achieved in other areas of the service.

With any 'performance drive' there is a danger that the quality of work can be seen as secondary. To ensure that this is avoided we are implementing a programme of Quality Assurance to ensure casework is of a standard which is at least 'Good'.

7.2 Number of Looked After Children (LAC)

There were 406 LAC at the end of May 2015. There were 22 admissions and 15 children who ceased to be LAC during May.

Although the numbers of LAC are in line with our Statistical Neighbours, they are higher than the National Average and best performing Local Authorities. They are also rising. Early Help arrangements need to be strengthened over time to prevent the need for children to come into care. This is part of the departmental strategy. In the short term, attention will be focussed on those children in care who could be secured permanence outside of the care system, for example, through Special Guardianship Orders, Child Arrangement Orders and/or rehabilitation to family members. The number of children placed out of the Borough in independent placements is also high but the strategy to reduce usage is multi-faceted and some measures, for example, foster care recruitment, have long lead in times.

7.3 Looked After Children (LAC) With An Up-To-Date Plan

94.3% of LAC had an up-to-date plan at the end of May 2015. When a child reaches 16 years and 3 months, they become eligible for a Pathway Plan. 78% of eligible LAC had an up-to-date Pathway Plan.

Performance in relation to Plans for Looked After Children remains above 90%, the weekly Performance meeting identifies each child without an up-to-date plan and there is a requirement that this is followed up by the responsible manager. Absence of an up-to-date LAC Plan in almost all cases has been due to the presence of an alternative plan, for example, the child has had a Pathway Plan put in place as they have reached 16 years of age and 3 months, or because the correct process has not been followed on the IT system to link the document to the section where the data is extracted. The 22% without an up-to-date Pathway Plan relates to 9 individuals (at the time of writing), these are individuals who have recently triggered the need for a Plan.

7.4 LAC Placements

44 of our LAC (10.5%) have had 3 or more placements in the rolling 12 months. This is an improvement on the annual trends for the previous 2 years as 2013/14 was at 11.2% and 2014/15 was 12%.

Of the 149 LAC in long term placements, 106 (71.1%) have been stable for at least 2 years. This number has improved slightly over the course of the year, the lowest being 68.3% in May 2014.

Performance in relation to LAC stability will be examined closely as part of our strategy to reduce the number of children in Out of Authority placements. We need to ensure that stability does not mask case drift and results in children remaining Looked After longer than necessary. We are also aware that data quality related to recording missing episodes may impact on the 3 or more moves stability indicator. Once this is corrected this indicator may deteriorate. Additionally, we need to closely examine our balance of placements to ensure there is not over reliance on Residential care for those children who would be better placed in a family setting.

Every child in Residential care will be reviewed by a Senior Manager over the coming months to ensure their Care Plans take account of their needs and consider whether it is possible and appropriate to plan for a move into a more appropriate family based setting.

7.5 LAC Review

90% of LAC cases were reviewed within timescale in May 2015. This has dropped from 94.8% the previous month.

With regard to LAC Reviews the performance data indicates that there were 6 reviews out of timescale in May. Through validation and exploration of the files, it is confirmed that 2 LAC Reviews were held out of timescale during May. One was out of timescale by 1 day to support the young person attending the Review. The second was due

to poor time planning. A tracker of due dates is being completed to support Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure meetings are planned and held in timescale. Of the 4 remaining cases, 3 are data entry errors, the 4th was within timescale. The data on the records has been amended to reflect this.

7.6 LAC Visits

95.2% of LAC visits were up-to-date to National Minimum Standards, which again decreased from the previous month, which was 98.6%.

In relation to visits to LAC, these are monitored at the weekly Performance meeting. Performance in relation to visits within the National Minimum Standards is good and any visit exceeding statutory minimum timescales is examined on a child by child basis to ensure they have been subsequently visited and to ensure the reason for lateness is understood.

In addition to statutory minimum standard Rotherham has set a local standard that exceeds this performance in relation to this has increased but the progress is slower. More recently, given the increased focus, visits that are out of statutory minimum dates have been related to delayed recording of visits. Action has been taken where workers are regularly slow in recording on the system to address this as a performance or skills issue. 79% of LAC visits are up to date to the Rotherham local standards.

7.7 LAC Health and Dental Assessments

At the end of May 2015, 80.8% of children had an up-to-date Health Assessment. This is slightly below the annual figure for 2014/15 which was 81.4%.

For Dental Assessments, 59.9% of LAC were up-to-date. The annual figure for 2014/15 was 58.8%.

Performance in relation to Health and Dental Assessments is poor. In particular, Initial Health Assessments need to improve, and the frequency of Dental Assessments is not good enough.

A Task and Finish Group has been established to examine the causes of poor performance and to develop revised processes where required. One of the initial findings identified by the group is that the local dental practice of check-ups being less than 6 monthly is having an adverse impact on performance, this is to be addressed through dental leads.

7.8 LAC Personal Education Plans (PEP)

At the end of May 2015, 66.1% of LAC had an up-to-date PEP. This is a slight increase from the previous month, which was 64%, however, it is still lower than the annual number last year of 71.4%.

Previously, the education of Looked After Children was supported by The Get Real Team. This team ceased to exist from 1st April, 2015,

and this has been replaced by a new Virtual School in line with National Best Practice guidance. Performance in PEPs has declined over the past 3 months which is of concern. This is linked to the changes and adjustment to new systems. This will be addressed in Performance meetings with the Management Team.

The completion of the PEP is moving towards an E-PEP system to commence in September (start of Autumn term) which should lead to an improvement as PEPs' will be created directly on the system rather than relying on workers placing the PEP onto the ESCR system as a Word document.

7.9 Adoptions

50% of children adopted at the end of May 2015 had completed the process within 12 months of the SHOBPA (Should Be Placed for Adoption decision). This number fluctuates month on month due to the low numbers of Adoptions. The previous 2 months was at 100%.

The average number of days between a child becoming Looked After and having an Adoption placement was 566 in May, which fails the A1 Measure, with a target of 487 days or less. Also, the average number of days between Placement Order and being matched with the adoptive family was 295 days in May, which again fails the A2 Measure, with a target of 121 days.

8. Finance

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications in regard to the performance report itself, however, supporting Looked After children is a key priority and a current and recurring budget pressure, particularly in relation to the cost of those children and young people who are placed out of authority.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

- 9.1 Resources have been strengthened in relation to developing improved services for children and young people who are Looked After in Rotherham.
- 9.2 A Quality Assurance Framework has been developed to ensure that the quality of services for children and young people is regularly audited and assured.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

- 10.1 Strengthening performance management, particularly in relation to Looked After children has been a priority since the Jay Report and OFSTED inspection report were published in August and November respectively. Weekly reporting of information is in place and scrutinised at a child level to ensure that the quality of the services to our Looked After children improves.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

11.1 Monthly Performance - Corporate Parenting - May 2015

Contact Name: Sue Wilson,
Head of Service, Performance and Planning, CYPS
E-mail: sue.wilson@rotherham.gov.uk
Telephone: Extension 22511