

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO AUDIT COMMITTEE

1.	Meeting:	Corporate Parenting Panel
2.	Date:	22 nd September 2015
3.	Title:	Performance of services for looked after children as at 31 st July 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 as at the 31st July 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 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 continues to take place to develop a specific Corporate Parenting Dashboard which will be presented quarterly to the Corporate Parenting Panel

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Performance information around looked after children is reported routinely on a fortnightly basis to the weekly CYPs Performance Board this includes Looked After Children, Care Leavers, Fostering, Adoptions, LAC Outcomes and Placements.

Future Corporate Parenting performance reports will reflect the key measures which are being 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 pattern to those achieved in other areas of the service with the additional rigour of the current performance management arrangements

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)

At the end of July 2015 there were 423 looked after children, this compares with 391 in the same period in 2014.

Although the numbers of LAC are in line with our statistical neighbours they are higher than the national average and the best performing LAs. They have also been steadily rising which is a concern. Early help arrangements need to be strengthened over time to prevent the need for children to come into care, this is part of the broader departmental strategy. The last 3 months have seen a rise in the number of admissions to care if this pattern continues there will need to be further analysis to determine whether there are any unnecessary admissions into care. In the short term attention is being focussed on discharges from the care system. The service is currently reviewing cases to determine those children in care who could be secured permanence outside 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

At the end of July 2015 there 97.4% of looked after children who had an upto date plan and 94.2% of those children preparing to leave care with a pathway plan

Performance in relation to plans for Looked After Children and Care Leavers has improved. 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 or recording issues. The completion of pathway plans has steadily risen over the last quarter. The next few months will be concentrating on the quality of the plans that

are in place and the quality of the work which the plans should be driving. The remits of both the locality and looked after children teams are being adjusted in order to enable social workers to develop a more specialist approach to distinct areas of work and the move towards embedding the Strengthening Families model is expected to contribute to the improvement in the quality of plans generally that is required.

7.4 LAC Placements

At the end of July 2015 73% of looked after children have had a stable placement for more than 2 years, with 9% of looked after children who had 3 or more moves

Performance in relation to LAC placement 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 result in children remaining looked after longer than necessary. Our sufficiency strategy identifies that we have too many children placed in residential care and we will need to shift that balance to have more children 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 Reviews and Visits

At the end of July 2015 89.2% of looked after children had a review in timescale and 99% had been visited by their social worker in line with national minimum standards (with 89% within our local standards)

The figures in the dashboard states that 11 children's reviews completed in July were out of timescale. Analysis of these has taken place and the detail is well understood by the service manager.

In relation to visits to LAC these are regularly monitored at the performance meeting. Performance in relation to visits within the national minimum standards remains well above 90%, 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.

Rotherham has set a local standard that exceeds the National one, performance in relation to local standard has stagnated and will be picked up through the performance meetings. Action will be taken with workers who do not conduct visits within required timescales or where there is persistent poor practice in recording on the system

7.6 LAC Health and Dental Assessments

At the end of July 2015 88.2% of looked after children had had both a health assessment and a dental check

Performance in relation to health and dental assessments continues to be poor, in particular initial Health Assessments need to improve, and the frequency of dental assessments is not good enough. There are shortfalls in the information being

entered on the system and lack of timeliness in initial health assessment conducted when children first come into care.

The concerted effort over July did not achieve the improvement this may have been weakened by annual leave. The service and team managers are now taking steps to address this and escalate any barriers other than the difficulty of recording it on the current system.

7.7 LAC Personal Education Plans (PEP)

At the end of July 2015 92.9% of looked after children have a PEP with only 72.6% having an upto date one

Previously education of Looked After Children was supported by The Get Real team, this team ceased to exist from the 1st April 2015 and this has been replaced by a new Virtual School in line with national best practice guidance. Performance in PEP's 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 and work has commenced to chase reports where PEP meetings have occurred.

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.

7.8 Adoptions

During the 4 months to the end of July 2015 there had been 15 children adopted with 11 of this within 12 months of their "should be placed for adoption" decision (SHOBPA) – 73.3%

Performance each month can vary significantly given the size of the cohort therefore any delays on single cases can make an impact on performance. It is crucial that every child is matched to an adopter who can meet their needs, this family finding can be impacted by the complexities of these needs. For children with highly complex medical needs and disabilities family finding can be very difficult. Some cases can also be delayed due to delays in the early stages of the process when applying to the court for agreement to take the child into care.

The total year to date figures for 15/16 suggest a decline from performance in 14/15 which had significantly improved from 13/14. There is a current pressure in relation to the available number of inhouse adopters and this is likely to result in the need to purchase placements from other adoption providers. The adoption recruitment campaign is being redesigned and shared arrangements with other South Yorkshire authorities are being explored.

8. Finance

8.1 There are no specific financial implications in regard to the performance report itself, however supporting looked after child 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 & Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 Strengthening performance management, particularly in relation to looked after children has been a priority since the Jay report 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 – July 2015

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