
Council Report Corporate Parenting Panel – 7th June 2016

Title 2015/2016 Year End Performance – Corporate Parenting

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

- Jean Imray (Interim Deputy Director)
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Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected All

Summary

This report provides a summary of performance in relation to services for Looked After Children (and is a subset of the broader Children's Social Care Services performance report) at the end of the 2015/16 reporting year, it also represents the monthly report for March 2016. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report which provides trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.

These measures are based on the suite of indicators that have been presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel during the year 2015/16 and will be supplemented during the coming year with additional key measures that underpin the developing Children in Care Strategy.

Recommendations

- That the Corporate Parenting Panel receive the report and accompanying dataset and consider issues arising

List of Appendices Included

Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Performance Report (March 2016)

Background Papers

none

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required No

Exempt from the Press and Public No

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel receive the report and accompanying dataset and consider any issues arising

2. Background

- 2.1. This report provides a summary of performance under key themes for services for looked after children at the end of the 2015/16 reporting year and also represents the monthly report for March 2016 and is a subset of the Children's Social Care Services report. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report which provides trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.
- 2.2. Targets, including associated 'RAG' (red, amber, green rating) tolerances, were introduced in September 2015 against appropriate measures. These have been set in consideration of available national and statistical neighbour benchmarking data, recent performance levels and, importantly, our known improvement journey.
- 2.3. These measures are based on the suite of indicators that have been presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel during the year 2015/16 and will be supplemented during the coming year with additional key measures that underpin the developing Children in Care Strategy.

3. Key Issues

3.1. Key Performance Headlines

The table in 3.1.3 highlights some of this year's achievements in relation to services for looked after children and areas for further improvement. The recently appointed Head of Service, Children in Care is working with the service to ensure that improvements are made, not only to performance but to ensure sustained improvements in the quality of the provision.

3.1.1. Table 1: 2015/16 highlights

Good & improved performance in the last 12 months	Areas for further Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A reconfiguration of services has increased management oversight and ensured that caseloads are now consistently at manageable levels for workers across the service. ▪ Although further improvement work is needed on Health and Dental assessments, performance compared to last year has improved considerably. Health is now at 92.8% compared to last year's 81.4% and Dental is at 94.5% compared to 58.8% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a shortage of adopters which is impacting on the number of completed adoptions – 43 for the entire year. ▪ Although Looked After Children (LAC) visits against local standards have improved on last year's position of 64% to 80.2%, this rate of improvement has not been enough to reach the local target of 90%. Performance against national minimum standards of 96.5% is good. ▪ Timeliness of LAC reviews for the year was 83.3% a drop on the previous year's position of 94.9%. This was due to performance issues earlier in the year and equates to 15 children having at least one of their reviews go over time. ▪ The number of looked after children (LAC) who have had three or more placement moves in the year is far too high. Although the percentages are in line with national averages, the numbers are inconsistent with the aspirations for all children in care to benefit from a stable placement. ▪ There are too many care leavers who are not yet engaged in education, employment or training so there will be renewed focus on this over the next 12 months.

3.2. Plans

3.2.1. The introduction and then embedding of weekly exception reports and team level performance management meetings in 2015 has resulted in significant and sustained improvement in the proportion of children, across all case types with an up-to-date plan.

3.2.2. The rate of Looked After Children (LAC) with plans is consistently good over the year at over 98%. The 2015/16 year end position of 98.4% shows that there has actually been a negligible drop of 0.4% since the 2014/15 figure of 98.8%. Pathway plans have seen a significant improvement of nearly 20% to 97.5% when compared to last year end.

3.2.3. It is well understood that the quality of plans is crucial in terms of securing good outcomes for children and this will continue to be the focus of the 'Beyond Auditing' work that is underway across the localities. The new LAC

management team in the Children in Care service is renewing the focus on both the completion of plans and their quality. All exceptions are reviewed at least a fortnightly basis by senior managers and more frequently by operational managers to understand, at an individual child level, the reasons for any absence of a plan to enable appropriate action. Work is underway to make the children in care plans more young person friendly and this work will be undertaken in consultation with children and young people.

3.3. Visits

3.3.1. Improvements in visiting rates also clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the weekly performance management processes.

3.3.2. In relation to children in care, performance in relation to LAC visits within the National Minimum Standards has improved in recent months to 98.1%, broadly in line with the previous year's outturn. Over the year there has been a steady rate of improvement achieved against the local standard, which exceeds the national minimum, from 73% to 80.2%. This improvement needs to continue as this is still not considered good enough so it will remain an area of focus and sustained management attention. It is worth noting that there are some children in care who, due to their individual needs, are visited more frequently than the Rotherham local standard.

3.3.3. Each week, any child who does not have an up-to-date visit, is examined on an individual basis to ensure that they have been visited and to ensure the reason for the lateness is understood and to take appropriate remedial action where necessary.

3.4. Looked After Children (also known as children in care)

3.4.1. At the end of March there were 432 children in care which equates to 76.6 per 10,000 population. Although this still places us broadly in line with statistical neighbours we are far higher than the national average and there is an upward trajectory as admissions to care have increased.

3.4.2. 'Edge of care' arrangements need to be strengthened over time to prevent the need for children to come into care and developing this service forms a key strand of the Children In Care Sufficiency Strategy. This is particularly the case in respect of adolescents entering the care system for the first time. Outcomes are rarely improved for young people coming into care in adolescence and work will commence over the next few months to develop a service specifically to work with this group. During the last period there was a particularly large sibling group of younger children admitted which has impacted on the admissions figures. The use of Family Group Conferences is being explored to ensure that we can utilise any opportunities for children to remain within their families.

3.4.3. It is not unusual for numbers of children in care in an authority in intervention to rise as action is taken to address cases which have been drifting previously. The rise in the numbers of care proceedings in Rotherham is testimony to this happening locally. There is no feedback from the courts to suggest that any children are being brought before them unnecessarily. Over the next 12 months it would be expected for the position to plateau and then start to reduce gradually.

3.4.4. Of the eligible children in care 83.3% of their reviews over the entire year were completed in time which is a decline on the previous year which was 94.9%. This equates to 15 children having at least one review over timescales and relates to performance issues earlier in the year. Of the reviews held in March, 99% were within timescales with only one child whose review could not take place in time. The reasons for any late reviews are fed back to managers and action taken to address any practice issues.

3.5. Looked After Children - Placement Stability

3.5.1. At the end of March, 72.7% of long term LAC have been in the same placement for at least two years. This placement stability is better than the national average of 67% however it is important to be confident that what appears to be stability is not in fact masking drift in planning for children. The sufficiency strategy identifies that there are too many children placed in residential care. Work which commenced in January 2016 to address this has resulted in a number of young people being identified who will be moving to more local provision over the next few weeks and months. This may impact on the long term stability indicator but will result in better outcomes for those individual young people identified.

3.5.2. 11.9% of LAC have been in three or more placements in the last 12 months, this is broadly in line with national average of 11.0%.

3.5.3. Although placement stability measures compare well against statistical neighbours and national averages, performance in relation to children who have had 3 or more placement moves in a year is still of concern and in particular in relation to the numbers of children in care who have had missing episodes which count against this indicator. All children who have been missing or who are identified as being in 'unstable' placements are now subject to particular focus by way of regular 'Team Around the Placement' meetings. In the future they will also be considered as 'exceptions' in the fortnightly performance meetings. There remains much to do in order to strengthen the quality of practice in the children in care service across the board.

3.6. Looked After Children – Health & Dental

3.6.1. Performance in relation to health and dental assessments was very poor in previous years and has been the focus of concerted joint effort resulting in improvement in the last 12 months from 81.4% (March 2015) to 92.8% (March 2016) for Health Assessments and from 58.8% (March 2015) to 95.0% (March 2016) for Dental Assessments.

- 3.6.2. However, in month performance has been higher in the year and partners are working towards better consistency and outcomes for all Rotherham's LAC. Close monitoring through the weekly performance process means that any dips in performance are understood.
- 3.6.3. Quality Assurance processes of assessments within Health, following completion, can create time lags between the assessment occurring and showing on the system as complete but we are working with health colleagues to reduce this.
- 3.6.4. From child level reviews of exceptions it is known that, in the main, those not having health or dental checks are the older young people who are recorded as 'refusers'. This is now being actively explored with health colleagues, regarding how the reviews can be promoted as something useful and young person friendly. Encouragement will be focused with young people on the things that interest most young people such as weight, hair and skin as well as other aspects of health. It will also be ensured that we are creative in thinking about how young people can be actively engaged, rather than expecting them to attend a standard clinic appointment. Performance will continue to be very closely monitored.

3.7. Looked After Children – Personal Education Plans

- 3.7.1. Previously, education of Looked After Children was supported by The Get Real Team. This team ceased to exist from the 1st of April 2015 and was replaced by a new Virtual School. The completion of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) moved to an E-PEP system in September 2015 (start of Autumn term). A revised PEP process is now in place with termly PEPs attended by a minimum of school, social worker and virtual school as well as LAC, carers, and other professionals. Extensive training has been provided to professionals on SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-scaled) targets for PEPs to improve effectiveness in driving outcomes. A rigorous quality assurance (QA) process is in place with evidence of quality of PEPs improving. There is also an increase in the number of PEPs reflecting Pupil Voice. Prior to September 2015 PEPs were in place for compulsory school-age children only. PEPs are now in place for LAC aged 2 to 18th birthday.
- 3.7.2. There has been good improvement within the year with 97.8% of children now having a PEP in place compared to 68.7% at the end of March 2015. 95% have a plan which is less than six months old compared to 76% at March 2015. But there is more to do to ensure that every child and young person has a plan in place and to ensure that none of these are older than a 'term'.

3.8. Care Leavers

- 3.8.1. The number of care leavers is relatively stable throughout the year at between 190 and 200 young people. At the end of March this was 197.

- 3.8.2. 96.5% of young people are in suitable accommodation, a slight drop on the previous year of 97.8% but still above the national average of 77.8%. This equates to five young people not in suitable accommodation, of these four are in custody, and one (aged over 18) has made himself intentionally homeless in order to live with his girlfriend. It is understood that more needs to be done to enhance the quality of the accommodation available as well as increasing the range of choices for young people. The Service Managers and Head of Service are working with commissioning colleagues to ensure that action is taken to ensure the best provision is available to Rotherham young people and increased planning will take place via a 16+ accommodation panel.
- 3.8.3. 68% of young people are in education employment or training, above the national average (45%) but a drop on the previous year 71% and very disappointing in terms of the aspirations for Rotherham young people. This equates to 60 of care leavers not being in education, employment or training (NEET). Work is underway to strengthen the offer to care leavers generally and tackling the need to support young people to be engaged in further education, training or employment will be given priority.

3.9. Adoptions

- 3.9.1. Performance each month can vary significantly given the size of the cohort which is always very small. There have been 4 adoptions in March taking the total for the reporting year to 42.
- 3.9.2. Given the small numbers it is most useful to look at a rolling 12 months than a month snapshot. Performance against the old national indicator relating to timeliness of adoption since the decision that the child 'Should Be Placed for Adoption' (SHOPBA) is low when compared to previous years at 53.5%. However the new national measures relating to days between 'becoming LAC and adoption placement (A1)' and 'days between placement order and match with the adoptive family (A2)' demonstrate an improving trend over the last 3 years. In respect of A1 we are better than the government benchmark with a reduction from an average of 661 days in 2013/14 to 338.5 in 2015/16. Similarly for measure A2 it has reduced from an average of 315 days in 2013/14 to 137.9 in 2015/16; however the government benchmark has not been met. This A2 target was not achieved due to 6 children with high level additional needs taking longer than usual to place. However all 6 children did achieve permanency through adoption thus providing them with an excellent outcome of becoming part of a new family and no longer in the care system..
- 3.9.3. The number of RMBC adopters decreased in 2015/16 compared to previous years. This is partly attributable to increase robustness at screening stage to improve quality of pool combined with regional picture that is one of significant decrease in overall number of adopters being approved across local authorities.
- 3.9.4. In March only 2 out of the 4 children adopted had the order made within 12 months of the 'should be adopted decision'. These children had been

placed with their adoptive parents for well over a year before the order was made because of some complexities in the therapeutic support that was required.

3.10. Additional measures to be monitored

3.10.1. As part of the development of the Children in Care Strategy additional measures will be reported in the Corporate Parenting Panel Performance Report which will provide elected members as corporate parents additional assurance about the performance of a wider range of services for looked after children, examples of which include performance around:

- Effective care planning
- Placement stability and range of high quality placement provision
- Health issues of children and young people in care
- Educational attainment and achievement
- Being part of a community

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1. The full corporate parenting performance report attached at Appendix A represents a summary of performance across a range of key national and local indicators with detailed commentary provided by the service.

5. Consultation

5.1. Not applicable

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1. Not applicable

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1. There are no direct financial implications to this report. The relevant Service Director and Budget Holder will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and members will be consulted where appropriate.

8. Legal Implications

8.1. There are no direct legal implications to this report.

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1. There are no direct human resource implications to this report. The relevant Service Director and Managers will identify any implications arising from

associated improvement actions and members will be consulted where appropriate.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1. The performance report relates to services for looked after children and young people.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1. There are no direct implications within this report

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1. Partners and other directorates are engaged in improving the performance and quality of our services to children, young people and their families via the Rotherham Local Children's Safeguarding Board (RLSCB). The RLSCB Performance and Quality Assurance Sub Group receive this performance report on a regular basis.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1. Inability and lack of engagement in performance management arrangements by managers and staff could lead to poor and deteriorating services for children and young people. Strong management oversight by Directorship Leadership Team and the ongoing weekly performance meetings mitigate this risk by holding managers and workers to account for any dips in performance both at a team and at an individual child level.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

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Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Named officer

Director of Legal Services:- Named officer

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):-

Name and Job Title.

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