

Council Report

Cabinet and Commissioner Decision Making Meeting - 11 July 2016

Title

Children & Young People's Services (CYPS) 2015/2016 Year End Performance

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas, Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

Deborah Johnson (Performance Assurance Manager – Social Care)

Anne Hawke (Performance Assurance Manager – Early Help)

Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of performance under key themes for Children's Social Care Services at the end of the 2015/16 reporting year and will be presented to Cabinet on an annual basis. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report at Appendix A which provides trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.

Recommendations

- 2.1 The Commissioner is asked to receive the report and accompanying dataset (Appendix A) and consider issues arising.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix A – Children's Social Care Annual Performance Report (March 2016)

Appendix B – Letter from Ofsted "Outcome of improvement work undertaken in Rotherham, August 2015-April 2016" dated 13 June 2016

Background Papers

Ofsted Improvement Letter

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Improving Lives Select Committee 15th June 2016 (to be confirmed)

Council Approval Required No

Exempt from the Press and Public No

Title: Children & Young People's Services 2015/2016 Year End Performance

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Commissioner is asked to receive the report and accompanying dataset (Appendix A) and consider issues arising.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report evidences the council's commitment to improvement and provides performance information to enable scrutiny of the improvements and the impact on the outcomes for children and young people. It provides a summary of performance under key themes for Children's Social Care Services at the end of the 2015/16 reporting year. 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, Rotherham's improvement journey.
- 2.3 As the end of the 2015/16 reporting year has now been reached it is important that there is a review of the measures in the report, their targets and any associated tolerances and that appropriate adjustments or additions are made for 2016/17. This will ensure continued retention of the right focus on the effectiveness of services and achieving good outcomes for children and young people in relation to local priority areas for improvement. For example, one of the priorities is to reduce the number of children in care being placed in residential care, so in future there will be a performance measure to help with the monitoring of progress in this regard.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Table one and two below highlights some of this year's achievements and areas for further improvement.

Table 1: Examples of good and improved performance in the last 12 months

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) response rates are high: 96.5% at contact and 92.8% for referrals received in the full year. Recent data shows performance is regularly above 98%.• The assessment backlog of 313 has been eradicated. At year end there were no open assessments over 45 days.• Assessments completed in 45 working days improved from 70.1% in 2014/15 to 92.8% in 2015/16, with in-month performance reaching 98.4%. Audit work is also reporting improvements in the quality of assessments. |
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- Children in Need (CIN) with up-to-date plans improved from 65.1% in 2014/15 to 98.6% in 2015/16.
- In month data for up-to-date Child Protection Plans (CPPs) is regularly above 98% and at year end was 100%.
- Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences within 15 working days has improved from 65% in 2014/15 to 88.3% for 2015/16. March performance is 94.1%.
- A review of all long term CPPs has reduced the percentage open for 2 years from 4.2% in 2014/15 to 0.8% in 2015/16.
- A reconfiguration of services has increased management oversight and ensured that caseloads are now consistently at manageable levels for workers across the service.
- The performance of Looked After Children (LAC) visits over the year against national minimum standards is good at 96.5%. However against the very aspirational local 28 day target of 90% performance at 80.2% needs to improve.
- The new national measure relating to days between 'becoming LAC and adoption placement (A1) is performing significantly better than the government benchmark with a reduction from an average of 661 days in 2013/14 to 338.5 in 2015/16 (national data published end of Quarter 3 was 532 days national average).
- The number of Care Leavers with an up to date Pathway Plan has increased by nearly 20% to 97.5%
- 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%
- There has been good improvement within the year with 97.8% of LAC now having a Personal Education Plan (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.
- The work of The Evolve Team (CSE) is consistently of a high quality with outcome of audits good or better and with 100% visits carried out, 100% Child Protection Plans in place and up to date during March 2016

Table 2 – Key areas for further improvement

- The number of Section 47 (S47) investigations is high and is currently the subject of an intensive review.
- The re-referral rate to social care, although declining in recent months, at 27.9% for March and 30.9% for the entire year, is still high compared to statistical neighbour and national benchmarking data.
- 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 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.
- Although there has been a significant increase in the number of PEPs during the year

the educational progress of LAC needs to improve significantly.

- Quality of practice still not consistently good and supported by results of recent audit activity, which shows 25% of case work meeting high standard set by the authority.

3.2 Early Help

3.2.1 In the last six months there has been a significant redesign of Early Help services and the local Early Help offer. In October 2015 the new integrated Early Help locality service was created, bringing together staff from a range of previously separate services and professional disciplines. These include: Education Welfare, Youth Offending, Children Centres, Integrated Youth Support, Family Support and 'Troubled Families' (Families for Change). This was swiftly followed by the establishment of the Early Help Triage Team to work alongside the social care Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

3.2.2 The improved arrangements had an immediate impact, with the previous backlog of Early Help Assessments cleared within two weeks, with a month on month increase in contacts and referrals transferring from the MASH.

3.2.3 In February 2016 the weekly Step-Down Panel was introduced. Co-chaired by senior managers in Early Help and Safeguarding, the panel ensures that there is a consistent and robust process in place to manage, monitor and clearly record outcomes for all cases stepping down from Duty and Assessment teams and/or those whose CIN plan has ceased. Since the panel began in February, 90 families have stepped down (232 children) to Early Help Locality Teams, along with making recommendations for nine families and 18 children to be worked with by partners.

3.2.4 Performance management arrangements have been developed for the new service and monthly monitoring is in place for the new reporting year (from April 2016). There is a mixture of statutory, national and local indicators which will evidence the effectiveness of service delivery and improvements over a period of time. In addition, success will be measured through wider impact measures including: reduction in children in need; increase in school attendance; increase in families engaging with Children's Centres and reduction in the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

3.3 Contact and Referral

3.3.1 The Rotherham MASH went live in April 2015. Processes and performance were reviewed during May 2015 and some key remedial actions were taken in response. A recent independent review of the MASH reported to the Children's Improvement Board

in March 2016 that whilst there was still further work to do, 'enormous progress' had been made in a very short space of time.

- 3.3.2 Overall there has been a 16% increase in contacts with 12,165 in 2015/16 compared to 10,517 in 2014/15. The numbers of contacts into the system rose in the early months of the year and then has remained relatively stable with approximately 1,000 being received every month. The independent review of the MASH stated that there will be a number of factors that impact on the general volume of contacts. One is that as confidence in the competence and responsiveness of the service increases there would be an expectation that contacts from some sources would rise. Then as key safeguarding partners increase their understanding about thresholds for social care it might result in contacts from some sources seeing a reduction. Finally, as the Early Help pathway (launched on 18th January) is further embedded and better understood, families who might previously have been referred to social care will be re-directed at source into a more appropriate Early Help service.
- 3.3.3 When the past 12 months' data is reviewed it appears that contacts made by education, which includes schools, have risen over the past few months. On the basis of feedback from schools it is understood that this is indicative of an increased confidence in the quality and helpfulness of the service at the "front door". There has been some reduction in the number of contacts from health services which may be an indication of better understanding of thresholds for social care. This has been an area of awareness raising that has been worked on in recent months. The majority of contacts from the Police relate to domestic abuse notifications. There has been a strengthened daily triage system put in place to deal with these. The Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor works with a MASH Social Worker to assess cases. This guarantees immediate actions are in place to ensure the safety of the individual and any children involved. The improved Early Help pathway will assist over time in effectively diverting some contacts directly into Early Help services via the Early Help Triage team and through step-down of cases via the Early Help Panel.
- 3.3.4 The MASH response rate is good. A total of 96.5% contacts and 99.0% referrals had decisions made within timescales. The quality of these decisions has been validated by Ofsted during three separate improvement visits and by the independent review reported to the Improvement Board in March 2016.
- 3.3.5 Similar to contacts, month on month social care referral numbers are consistent at approximately 400 per month (around 40% of contacts). In total there have been 4,915 referrals in 2015/16, a 9% increase on the 4,513 in 2014/15. There has been a month on month downward trajectory in the proportion of these which are re-referrals; following a mid-year high of 35.3% in August 2015 this has now reduced to 27.9% in March 2016. Improvements in the

quality of first time assessments and the developing early help offer are both understood to have supported better performance in this area.

3.3.6 In addition, as the MASH has developed, more work is undertaken at referral stage in terms of information sharing and effective triage before progression to assessment teams. This is resulting in fewer referrals converting to assessment, with 77.6% in March 2016 compared to 87.1% in April 2015. This in turn allows for social care resources being better targeted to need and families receiving a more appropriate response. The independent review of the MASH (2016) found that “social work analysis and articulation of need, harm and risk within the MASH is good”, far better than in many other local authority settings visited. This is apparent in social work analysis and the recommendations being made by decision makers.

3.4 Assessments

3.4.1 Although the numbers of contacts and referrals have both increased over the last 12 months, the reduction in the conversion of referral to assessment means that fewer assessments are now being started. Feedback from workers and auditors, however, suggests an increase in the complexity of the cases coming through. This may be indicative of improved practice in the duty teams resulting in more accurate recognition and analysis of both risk and need. There will be further observation and analysis of this over coming months.

3.4.2 The overall trend of the proportion of assessments resulting in 'No Further Action' is downwards, which is a positive reflection of the improvement in quality of decision making and application of thresholds. The downward trend of repeat referrals supports this view. Whilst it has been positive to see an increase in step down decisions as opposed to closure of cases it is better for families to be directed straight into early help wherever possible rather than be routed through social care in the first instance. As early help pathways and triage systems become more familiar to referring partner agencies, the numbers of contacts, referrals and then assessments in social care should start to decrease. The early help data is starting to show an increase of work redirected at both contact and referral stage, which may also account in part for the reduction in the numbers of assessments as well as a reduction of step down at the conclusion of social care assessment.

3.4.3 Early in 2015 additional short-term resources were put in place to address significant backlogs of work within the assessment service. Over the summer, when these resources were removed, there was a period of time when the number of open assessments over timescales increased, which then in turn impacted on performance in the autumn. A combination of the reduction in volume of work, changes to the way duty teams are organised and increased management grip has seen a significant improvement in the

timeliness of assessment completion again in March, with 98.4% of assessments completed within 45 working days compared to a low of 83.9% in November. In total 92.8% of all assessments completed in 2015/16 were completed in time compared to 88.8% in 2014/15.

3.4.4 Although the above performance information is important, an emphasis on quality in Children and Young People's Services remains a priority and this will continue to be monitored and tested to ensure that the drive to improve timeliness is not at the cost of achieving best practice. Feedback from the March 2016 Ofsted improvement visit stated, "No widespread or serious concerns. Clear improvement in practice and management oversight since the last visit in October 2015". (Appendix B) Whilst the inspector identified a number of examples of 'good' assessments during her visit there remains further work to do to ensure consistently good quality assessments are produced right across the service.

3.5 Plans

3.5.1 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.

3.5.2 At the end of 2014/15 only 65.1% of eligible CIN had an up-to-date plan. As of the end of 2015/16 this has now improved to 98.6%. Any missing Child Protection Plans (CPPs) had, on the whole, already been addressed by the end of the 2014/15 reporting year with performance at 97.6%, however, month on month data demonstrates that current CPPs are now well embedded with performance rarely dropping below 99.5% (showing 100% at year-end).

3.5.3 Similarly to CPPs, the rate of 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 for care leavers have seen a significant improvement of nearly 20% to 97.5% when compared to last year.

3.5.4 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 on 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.

3.6 Visits

- 3.6.1 Improvements in visiting rates also clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the weekly performance management processes.
- 3.6.2 At the end of March 2016, 99% of children subject to a CPP had been seen within timescale, compared to 92% at the end of March 2015.
- 3.6.3 In relation to children in care, performance in 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 is highly ambitious and aspirational, which exceeds the national minimum, from 73% to 80.2%. This improvement needs to continue as this is still not considered good enough for Rotherham, so it will remain an area of focus with 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.
- 3.6.4 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 remedial action taken where necessary.

3.7 Section 47

- 3.7.1 As reported throughout the year, Section 47 (S47 - a duty to make enquiries if there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm) investigation numbers are very high and are currently the subject of intensive review. In March there were 164 Section 47s started, the highest month of the year, (average per month 123). The rate per 10,000 population of 262.1 is significantly higher than the statistical neighbour average of 141.3.
- 3.7.2 The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance led a review and a report was submitted to the CYPS Performance Board at the end of May 2016. The outcome indicates that the high numbers of S47s reflect an ongoing lack of confidence in addressing the presenting risk for the child in any way other than by S47 and child protection investigation. This risk averse practice is not uncommon in authorities in intervention. Although this is not indicative of practice that has children being left at risk of significant harm, (in child protection terms), it must still be addressed as it is an over interventionist style of social work practice. This is often not effective in engaging families for the longer term.

- 3.7.3 Outcomes of completed S47s point to a high proportion of cases where, while concerns were substantiated, children have no continuing risk of significant harm and therefore do not need to be progressed to child protection conference (52.9% in March). This suggests that a normal level of assessment, (Section 17 – duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need) rather than a S47 investigation may have been a more appropriate response. The review also identified multiple other practice issues requiring attention on a single and multi-agency basis. An action plan has been prepared and work to address these issues are underway.
- 3.7.4 Significant data validation issues identified earlier in the year relating to Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) have now been addressed and the performance data report amended to show in-month data rather than 'rolling year'. This has allowed for clearer understanding of current performance trends.
- 3.7.5 In 2015/16, 88.3% of the total ICPCs were carried out within 15 days which is better than the latest statistical neighbour and national averages. Monthly data demonstrates that current performance is now higher than 90% with an average of only one conference missing timescales each month. The reasons for not meeting timescales are reported to senior managers and recorded on each case. These will continue to be monitored and it is expected that there will be better consistency month-on-month and further improvement overall. In March performance was at 94.1%, the one initial conference which went over the 15 days was a result of late booking on the part of one of the locality teams. This matter has been addressed by the manager concerned.

3.8 Children in Need

- 3.8.1 There is no good or bad performance in relation to numbers of CIN although it is important to monitor against statistical neighbour and national averages as numbers considerably higher or lower than average can be an indicator of other performance issues. At the end of March there were 1430 CIN, when combined with the those subject to CPP this equates to a rate of 320.0 per 10k population; a reduction on the previous month and broadly in line with the national average of 337.3.
- 3.8.2 One of the measures of success of the early help offer will be, over time, a reduction in the numbers of CIN as families are offered support at an earlier point before concerns escalate. This is in addition to ongoing support from Tier 2 (targeted services) as they are stepped down and out of statutory intervention. It is far too early in the development of the early help provision to conclude that the last three months' reduction in numbers is the beginning of a trend. It is more likely that it represents a recent review of all open CIN cases during the reconfiguration of the locality teams, which has led to closure and stepping down of some cases where appropriate. It

is predicted that for a period of time numbers of CIN may rise as those with a child protection plan reduce.

3.9 Children on Child Protection Plans

3.9.1 At the end of March 2016 there were 369 children subject to a CPP, which is a significant reduction on March 2015 when there were 433. However, the rate per 10,000 population of 65.4 demonstrates that this is still high when compared to statistical neighbours and the national average of 46.1 and 42.9 respectively.

3.9.2 It is expected that the numbers will continue to fall as practice improves, CPPs are worked more effectively and managers become more confident in their decision making. Children's Social Care is already more robust in ensuring that only children, where likely or actual significant harm has occurred, are taken to conference and in ensuring that the threshold for a plan is met. The overall downward trend in CPPs adds further weight to the need to address the high numbers of child protection investigations which are still being undertaken.

3.9.3 Of the children subject to a CPP plan at the end of the year, 94.2% of their reviews over the entire year were completed in time which is a decline on the previous year which was 96.5%. In month, performance for March was 98.9% with only one child whose review could not take place in timescales, due to a parent arriving at the conference intoxicated and a decision was rightly taken to postpone the review. This was reconvened and completed the following week. The reasons for any late reviews are scrutinised and when necessary, management action is taken. There have been a number of occasions when family issues have been the reasons for conferences being postponed and these have outnumbered the occasions that there has been fault on the part of the service.

3.10 Looked After Children (LAC) (also known as children in care)

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

3.10.2 '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 any opportunities for children to remain within their families are utilised.

3.10.3 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, as edge of care services are developed and family alternatives to care are properly explored before the initiation of care proceedings.

3.10.4 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.

3.11 Looked After Children - Placement Stability

3.11.1 At the end of March, 72.7% of long term LAC has 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 and in fact masking a 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.

3.11.2 A total of 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%.

3.11.3 Although placement stability measures compare well against statistical neighbours and national averages, performance in relation to children who have had three 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.

3.12 Looked After Children – Health & Dental

3.12.1 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.

3.12.2 However, in-month performance has been higher during 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.

3.12.3 Quality Assurance processes of assessments within health, following completion, can create time lags between the assessment occurring and showing on the system as complete work is underway with health colleagues to reduce this.

3.12.4 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. Creative thinking is being used to ensure young people more actively engage. 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. Performance will continue to be very closely monitored.

3.13 Looked After Children – Personal Education Plans

3.13.1 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 timely) targets for PEP's to improve effectiveness in driving outcomes. A rigorous quality assurance process is in place with evidence of quality of PEP's improving. There is also an increase in the number of PEP's reflecting Pupil Voice. Prior to September 2015 PEP's were in place for compulsory school-age children only. PEP's are now in place for LAC aged 2 to 18th birthday.

3.13.2 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. A total of 95% have a plan which is less than six months old compared to 76% at March 2015, although 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'. Although this is positive, based on available data in 2015 educational outcomes for looked after children needs to improve significantly

3.14 Care Leavers

3.14.1 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.

3.14.2 A total of 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. 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 is taking steps to ensure that the best provision is available for Rotherham young people and increased planning will take place via a 16 + accommodation panel

3.14.3 A total of 68% of young people are in education employment or training, well above the national average (45%) but a drop on the previous year of 71% and disappointing in terms of the aspirations for Rotherham young people. This equates to 60 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.

3.15 Adoptions

3.15.1 Performance each month can vary significantly given the size of the cohort which is always very small. There have been four adoptions in March taking the total for the reporting year to 43.

3.15.2 Given the small numbers it is most useful to look at a rolling twelve 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 Rotherham is performing significantly better than the government benchmark with

a reduction from an average of 661 days in 2013/14 to 338.5 in 2015/16. (national published data at the end of Quarter 3 532 days national average). 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 six children with high level additional needs taking longer than usual to place. However, all six 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.

3.15.3 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. This is in line with the national trend.

3.15.4 In March only two out of the four children adopted had the order made within twelve months of the SHOPBA 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.

3.16 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

3.16.1 It will be noted that there is no data specific to CSE in this report. The performance of the CSE service is retained within all core activity areas. For example; within the assessment timescales; within plans in place; both child protection and children in care and written visits to children with child protection plans and to children in care. In this regard, the headline performance of the CSE Team "Evolve" is as closely scrutinised in the fortnightly performance meeting as every other part of the service. The low caseloads in the CSE service results in the exceptions being very few and far between.

3.16.2 The nature and intensity of work being undertaken in the Evolve CSE Service results from the extreme vulnerability of individual young people and the complexity of their needs. While the caseloads of individual workers are subject to the same random sampling audit process as other teams across the service, the Head of Service routinely carries out audits of all cases open in the team as well as supporting other managers by auditing CSE work allocated within the locality and children in care services. Any remedial action resulting from audits within the CSE team are taken with immediate effect. Ofsted have randomly selected cases from the Evolve Service on three separate occasions.

3.16.3 All cases selected have been judged as 'good' by Ofsted. Furthermore Ofsted has identified areas of work related to the management of complex investigations with police, which were felt

to be worthy of noting as examples of best practice, described as 'proactive, sensitive and robust'. The inspector also described months of proactive and tenacious work resulting in victims developing trusting relationships with social workers and police. The impact is, in many cases, young people making disclosures and identifying other victims.

3.16.4 All elements of work relating to CSE is also routinely scrutinised by the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Board (RSCB) under the auspices of the CSE Strategic Sub Group.

3.17 Caseloads

3.17.1 Weekly performance meetings continue to examine caseloads for every social worker in detail. All those over 22 are examined and the reasons explained. For example, some senior social workers have students allocated to them and the student caseload shows under the supervisor's name. In the locality teams it is not unusual to have social workers holding families with large sibling groups (over five) which will impact on the overall number of cases (children). Caseloads in Children's Disability Service have now reduced significantly following a specific piece of work to ensure that cases were in the correct teams. The very low caseloads in the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) team reflect the complexity and intensity of the work undertaken and the numbers of cases that are co-worked and supported. Ensuring that social workers have manageable caseloads was a key priority for Rotherham and the current performance is testimony to what has been achieved in this regard.

3.17.2 Significant action has been taken over the year, including a full service reconfiguration, to ensure each team has sufficient capacity in terms of numbers of workers, but just as importantly, action has also been taken to ensure effective throughput of work in respect of timely transfers and closures as appropriate.

3.18. Ofsted Feedback – Improvement Visits

3.18.1 Ofsted wrote to the council on the 13th June with a summary of the findings of the improvement monitoring visits undertaken in Rotherham Children's Services between August 2015 and April 2016 (Appendix B). Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) undertook five visits over an eight month period. Each visit has involved two HMI on-site for two days.

3.18.2 Inspectors reviewed the progress of the Improvement Plan in the following areas:

- Contact and referral (MASH) August 2015
- Duty and assessment and area child protection teams October 2015 and March 2016

- Leadership and management March 2016
- Early help April 2016

3.18.3 During the visits inspectors considered a range of evidence including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes, observation of social work practice, performance information, policies and strategic planning documents and meetings with key partner agencies. Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff including managers, social workers, other practitioners, agency partners and administrative staff.

3.18.4 Ofsted provided feedback in relation to their findings and identified improvements that they found and also any areas for further improvement (Appendix B). The existing Children's Improvement Plan which is monitored robustly on a monthly basis by the Children & Young People's Improvement Board reflects the areas for improvement that OFSTED also identified.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 The full service 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. The Commissioner is therefore recommended to consider and review this information.

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 and Commissioners 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 and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The performance report relates to safeguarding services for 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 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)

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director (CYPS)
Mel.meggs@rotherham.gov.uk

Nicole Chavaudra, Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Quality (CYPS)
Nicole.chavaudra@rotherham.gov.uk

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Named Officer - Joy Hobson

Director of Legal Services:- Named officer

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/A

Name and Job Title.

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