

Council Report Corporate Parenting Panel – 19th July 2016

Title Corporate Parenting Performance Report – April 2016

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

- Mel Meggs (Deputy Strategic Director)

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 April 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.

Recommendations

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

List of Appendices Included

Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Performance Report (April 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 and comment on 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 April 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, the known improvement journey.

3. Key Issues

3.1. Key Performance Headlines

The table in 3.1.1 highlights some of the achievements in relation to services for looked after children and areas for further improvement. The 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"> ▪ Caseloads continue to be consistently at manageable levels for workers across the service. ▪ Although further improvement work is needed on Health and Dental assessments, performance for April 2016 for Health Assessments was 90.9% and Dental was 90.5% which for Dental is a further improvement since last month. ▪ In April 99% of Looked After Children had their review undertaken in timescale. ▪ 99% of eligible looked after children have a pathway plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a shortage of adopters which is impacting on the number of completed adoptions, with 2 taking place in April. ▪ Although Looked After Children (LAC) visits against local standards was 77.2% in April this does not reach the local target of 90%. Performance against national minimum standards for April was good at 97.7%. ▪ The number of looked after children (LAC) who have had three or more placement moves is still 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. ▪ Audits show that the quality of practice for looked after children needs to improve.

3.2. Plans

3.2.1. The rate of Looked After Children (LAC) with plans has been consistently good. In April 96% of LAC had an upto date plan. Pathway plans have continued to improve with 99% of eligible LAC having a pathway plan.

3.2.2. 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 with 97.7% being visited in April. 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 April there were 437 children in care which equates to 77.5 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 has now commenced to develop a service specifically to work with this group. 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. Of the eligible children in care 99% (95 out of 96) LAC had their reviews completed in time in April. 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 April, 72.5% (103 out of 142) 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 is underway to address this.
- 3.5.2. 11.6% (51 out of 439) 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. In April performance was 90.9% Health Assessments and 90.5% for Dental Assessments.

3.6.2. Work is now underway to ensure that initial health assessments are undertaken routinely, this was a piece of work that the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board have been involved in, at the end of March 2016 10.2% of initial health assessments had been undertaken.

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 is underway 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.

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. In April 95.1% (274 out of 288) LAC who are eligible for a PEP had in one place. 90.3% (260 out of 288) had an upto date PEP. The virtual head continues to monitor this position.

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 April this was 192.
- 3.8.2. 97.9% of young people are in suitable accommodation. 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. 68.9% of young people are in education employment or training, above the national average (45%) but this is still very disappointing in terms of the aspirations for Rotherham young people. 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 2 adoptions in April.
- 3.9.2. Given the small numbers it is most useful to look at a rolling 12 months than a month snapshot. 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 at 362.5 days at the end of April. Similarly for measure A2 was 145.5 days at the end of April; however the government benchmark has not been met.
- 3.9.3. In April only 1 out of the 2 children adopted had the order made within 12 months of the 'should be adopted decision'.

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 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:- N/A

Director of Legal Services:- N/A

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

Name and Job Title.

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