

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Children and young people scrutiny committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>Monday 14 May 2018</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Children's safeguarding and family support performance data</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Interim assistant director safeguarding and family support</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

All wards

## **Purpose and summary**

To review the performance in relation to children's safeguarding and family support for the end of March 2018, together with trend data over the previous 12 months.

To allow the committee to undertake effective scrutiny of the council's statutory functions in relation to safeguarding for vulnerable children.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- (a) the performance of children's safeguarding and family support be reviewed and the committee determine any recommendations it wishes to make to the executive to consider in order to secure further improvement; and**
- (b) any other performance information which the committee would like to be included in further reports be identified.**

## Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options as this is an opportunity for scrutiny to review and challenge the performance of children's safeguarding and family support.

## Key considerations

2. The information below is a summary of the key considerations, further performance information can be found in respect of safeguarding and family support in appendix 1.

### What's going well

3. As this is the first year of single assessments this is the first annual reporting figure which will give a benchmark for future reporting. 72.3% of single social work assessments were completed within the statutory timescale in the year 2017/18. The appointment of permanent managers in our assessments teams consolidated this development. This improvement has been sustained over 2017 with some monthly variances. Further consideration is planned to take place to set appropriate targets going forward.
4. Further areas for scrutiny will be developed within the first quarter of 2018/19 and agreed by the director for children's wellbeing and the chair and vice chair of the children's scrutiny committee.
5. The Threshold of Care Panel has been in operation for a year and continues to oversee new admissions to the looked after system. Our rate of new admissions remains below the regional average and we can have confidence that a sustainable culture of appropriate decision making is now embedded at the end of quarter four there were 313 children in the looked after system.
6. We continue to provide stable placements for our looked after children and perform well against regional and national comparators. 85% of looked after children under the age of 18 have been in the same placement for more than 2.5 years.
7. There are concerns about the rise in the number of children subject to child protection plans, and this continues to be a priority focus for sustained improvement and consistent application of thresholds to work towards bringing the numbers closer to those of our statistical neighbours.
8. Decision making within the child protection conference arena continues to be effective, with only 2 children remaining on a child protection plan for more than two years at the end of December.
9. Applications to the local family justice court continue to conclude within the statutory timescale of 26 weeks. This is a notable achievement and our court is still the highest performing in the region and one of the best nationally. As a consequence children are not awaiting a decision on their future, whether that be a return to family, adoption or a long term care placement.

## Challenges

10. At the end of Quarter 4 2017/18 the number of children subject to a child protection plan was 201. During Quarter 4 there has been a decrease in children subject to child protection plans of 15 and we continue to monitor this new trend closely.
11. During this period the number of our Looked after Children has increased by 4 to 313. The Threshold of Care Panel continues to operate effectively to ensure that all new placements meet the appropriate criteria. The challenge has been, and remains, reducing our overall number of looked after children to a sustainable, demographically appropriate number: 220.
12. During the last quarter work within the directorate identified 80 young people who could have their care needs met through other arrangements including special guardianship or a return to family. An action plan was agreed and progress on this work is now a priority.
13. Progress with our application to join the Adoption Central England (ACE) regional adoption agency is progressing. A detailed application was submitted in the spring and there has been extensive discussion with the Department for Education and ACE over recent weeks. Once ACE have confirmed their decision we will be in a position to consider our internal governance processes.
14. A workforce action plan has now been devised to address the challenge we face in recruiting experienced social workers; this will continue to be monitored closely as this is implemented through the annual social care health check. Effectiveness would be a reduction in agency workers and an increase in the length of time social workers have been qualified.

## Community impact

15. Delivering the corporate plan is key to the council achieving the positive impact it wishes to make across Herefordshire and all of its communities; effective safeguarding and family support services contribute to achieving the corporate plan; specifically in respect of the priority to 'keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life'. The services provided also contribute to the children and young people's plan and the Health and Wellbeing strategy
16. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council must ensure that it has an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. The council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development, and review.

## Equality duty

17. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
18. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this report is providing and update on performance we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

## **Resource implications**

19. The report has no resource implications. The resource implications of any recommendations the committee may determine will be taken into account by the executive when considering its response.

## **Legal implications**

20. This report is required to allow the children and young people's scrutiny committee to perform its statutory duty to ensure that local public services are delivered effectively and efficiently. Service performance should also be monitored and suggestions for improvements made.

## **Risk management**

21. There are no risks associated with this report which is for information only.

## **Consultees**

22. Any actions arising from any consultations are incorporated into the main body of the report and any actions are also picked up as part of the overall improvement programme.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Safeguarding and family support performance report

## **Background papers**

None identified