

# Quality Assurance and Performance Management

## Summary

June and July have witnessed a continuation of the trend around demand and triage at the 'front door'. The continued decrease in the 'contacts to referral' rate is removing approx. 100 referrals a month from social care, an impact which should begin to 'work' through the system as backlog assessments are cleared (see analysis). S47 enquires also continue to reduce in number and the impact of this is best illustrated in the analysis of 12 months' worth of CHAT data in the table below.

### Assessment Timescales

Assessment completion timescales continue to decrease, moving further away from the SN rate. The impact of the need to complete many out-of-date assessments gives some confidence that this figure will now begin to move in a positive direction. It is of note that the stock of open assessments held within the 'Assessment Service' has more than halved since April 2023, a reduction fuelled by the decreased referral rate and a reduced backlog of 'out of date' assessments. As of 25/08/23 there were 21 'out of date' assessments within this service compared to 214 on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June. This significant reduction in out-of-date work will free up resource in the Assessment Service, this combined with robust performance management from within the service should see the figure begin to climb back towards the SN rate. The high agency occupancy and staff turnover in this service remains an ongoing risk. Since December 2022 the 4 teams within this service have had a total of 9 managers. The same period has seen a social work turnover of 120%. The impact upon families of this staff churn remains a key finding from QA and is a clear driver of reduced performance.

Outside of the Assessment service a number of new assessments have been opened as a result of having not been renewed for 12 months (the majority of these apply to our cared for children). Although these are updated rather than 'new' pieces of work, they nevertheless count against the overall completion rate if they take over 45 days to conclude.

The impact of the reduced number of referrals on capacity continues to be offset by the large number of assessments which are completed with a conclusion of 'no further action'. A focused analysis of this is required with the hypothesis that at least some of these interventions need not have taken place, been signposted elsewhere or dealt with by other services. Alternatively, a number of these assessments may have been defensibly closed at the 10-day review stage following team manager oversight. – This analysis will take place and be presented to the next Board.

### Missing

The current system of recording and reporting children and young people missing from home, care and education is problematic and not reliable. Therefore, the validity and the quality of data is inaccurate. A Task and Finish Group has been set up to review the recording and reporting functions on LCS. It became evident that the children and young people that go missing frequently, their Return Home Interview offers were not captured and closed on LCS in order to record the most recent Return Home Interview episode therefore the previously open missing episodes showing as RHI not offered. We have now amended the system to ensure all missing episodes capture RHI being offered. In addition, the Missing

Policy is also out of date, and this is being updated.

### Chat Data

The table below provides a comparison of KPIs presented in the CHAT reports from Jan 23 and July 23. Combined they represent 12 months' worth of performance information with a third column providing a comparator with statistical neighbours (where this is available). Of note are the steady decrease in s47 enquiries over the period as well as the increased rate at which those s47 enquires are converted into ICPCs - the hypothesis being that more effective application of threshold and decision making is being applied as the s47 stage.

The data illustrates that whilst the last 12 months have seen decreased rates of both 'Child in Need' and 'Child Protection' cases, the number of 'cared for' children has remained static and high. The rate of 114 children per 10,000 remains above the SN rate of approx. 90, the North west rate of 97 and the national rate of approx. 60. At present there of 617 cared for children in sefton, were this at the same rate as our statistical neighbours this number would be 487, a reduction of 130 children.

97 cared for children are placed at home on Care Orders. Sefton rates for this cohort are significantly above national and SN rates but are in line with those in the Northwest region where this practice is frequent. Considerable activity is now underway to identify those children where it would be safe and appropriate to apply to discharge these orders.

Of these 97 children, 61 are the subject of full care orders the other 36 are on interim care orders i.e the subject of ongoing proceedings before the Family Court. Of the 61 children on full care orders, 16 have active discharge applications before the court, with a further 13 identified and awaiting sign off.

In addition to these children, approximately 20 have been identified living either in long term foster placements or residential settings, where plans can be progressed to rehabilitate to parents of family members.

Since May 31<sup>st</sup> the number of children placed in unregistered settings has fallen to 4, with clear exit plans for 3 of these. Robust scrutiny and monitoring of these placements provides greater assurance as plans to move on are progressed.

Review of Chat Data: Aug 22 – Jan 23/Feb – July 23

Data	Jan 23	July 23	SN rate *	Comment
Referrals per 10K	829	611	579	Significant decrease which brings the figure closer to the SN rate of 579
Re-referrals	26%	26%	21%	Rate remains static and

				above the SN rate Of 21%
Assessments per 10K	897	840	622	Decrease of approx. 6%. This would need to be a reduction of 30% to match SN rates
Assessments completed 45 days	74%	56%	89%	Decreasing performance see analysis
S47 per 10k	348	260	207	Significant decrease of over 25%
Number of s47 enquires in period	941	703	NA	See above
Number of ICPCs resulting from S47	193 (20.5%)	171 (25%)	NA	Decreased number of s47 enquires with increased rate of ICPC suggestive of more appropriate triage
CP conference per 10K	71	63	74	11% decrease
Cin Per 10K	426	371	382	13% decrease
CP per 10k	66	59	50	11% decrease
Cared for 10k	114	114	90	Static
Cared for missing in period	11%	10%	11%	
Cared for dental checks	62%	75%	71%	13% increase
Cared for annual health assessment	88%	94%	93%	6% increase
Ceased Cared for and adopted	3%	3%	11%	Static and below SN rates
Ceased cared for SGO	20%	15%	17%	
Care leavers 19-21 suitable accommodation	93%	86%	90%	
EET	47%	45%	52%	

- Caution to be expressed re SN rates which are applicable to year 21/22

1	Overall Good or Improving Situation
2	Overall Improving but Impact Still Concerning
3	Not Improving

The table below represents a selection of performance data agreed with the Chair of the Improvement Board as representative of service performance across the service. Most data sets are presented as rolling 12-month figures back from the date specified. This report details June and July 2023. For 12 month figures monthly variations have limited impact on the overall figure, but direction of travel is observable.

	Status	Metric Description	Previous Metric Value (June)	Current Metric Value (July)	Statistical Neighbours Avg Rate	Direction of Travel (DoT) Description	DoT Difference Indicator	Comment	Action
Demand	2	MASH Contact Starts in last 12 Months (Nos)	14014	14213		Change from Previous Month	▲	Contacts throughout June and July (the period covered in this report ) show a slight increase on the 2 months previous, although this is not a consistent trend. In the six months between Feb – July an average of 1251 contacts each month have been received into the IFD, with a high of 1482 in March and a low of 1101 in May. Contact Sources remain broadly consistent, with the Police Contact (37%) making up the biggest source followed by schools (13%) and health (11%).	
	2	Referral Starts in last 12 Months (Nos)	3943	3808		Change from Previous Month	▼	The pattern of decreasing referrals now appears consistent with approx. 100 approx. 100 less referrals into social care each month. The impact of this is notable in the decrease of open assessments within the Assessment Service. This number stood at a 6-month high of 499 in April 2023, but has decreased markedly to a six-month low of 216 in July 2023. Whilst the number of contacts into the service remains steady, the decrease continues to be driven by the reduced percentage of contacts converted into referrals each month.	
	2	Contact to Referral Conversion Rate Last 12 Months (%)	28.4	27.0		Change from Previous Month	▼	See above	
	3	Referral Starts in last 12 Months (Rate per 10,000 children)	728.9	703.9	579.3	Change from Previous Month	▼	See above, this figure has decreased steadily over the last quarter: April: 769.2 May: 746.2 June: 728.9 July 703.9 These changes continue to bring the figure closer to the SN number of 579.3. Although Hypothetical, the current rate of reduction would see this figure reached in approx. 6 months. It needs to be borne in mind that all SN figures quoted in these reports are now approx. 12 months out of date .	
	3	Assessments Completed in last 12 Months (Nos)	4756	4673		Change from Previous Month	▼	Although reducing, number of assessments completed within Sefton remains high, and seemingly out of sync with the reduction of work entering the system. This is of relevance when considered alongside the high number of assessments which continue to conclude with no further action.	There needs to be a focused piece of QA around the issue of NFA assessments which considers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision making and triage at the point of allocation.</li> <li>• Quality of analysis</li> <li>• Oversight and review of assessment by TM</li> </ul>
	3	Assessments Completed in last 12 Months (Rate per 10,000 children)	879.1	863.8	622.0	Change from Previous Month	▼	See above	
	2	Children in Need Plans - Currently Open (Nos)	766	745		Change from Previous Month	▼	Number of open CiN plans shows a gradual if not consistent reduction. QA evidence clearly that this	CiN review project has now been up and running for a month. Dip

	Status	Metric Description	Previous Metric Value (June)	Current Metric Value (July)	Statistical Neighbours Avg Rate	Direction of Travel (DoT) Description	DoT Difference Indicator	Comment	Action
								cohort of work shows variable quality as well as compliance	samples of cases reviewed in this manner give positive early indications of quality and compliance. A focused analysis of the impact of this can be presented at next IB when project is more embedded.
	3	Children Subject to Section 47 Enquiries in last 12 Months (Nos)	1882	1808		Change from Previous Month	▼		
	3	Children Subject to Section 47 Enquiries in last 12 Months (Rate per 10,000 children)	347.9	334.2	207.5	Change from Previous Month	▼	The rate of children subject to S47 enquiries continues to decrease at a steady rate although it continues to exceed the SN figure. The analysis in the summary section of the report illustrates the direction of travel over the previous twelve months in terms of the number of enquires as well as the rate at which they are converted into children protection conferences and subsequent CP plans	
	2	Child Protection Plans - Currently Open (Nos)	333	324		Change from Previous Month	▼	CP numbers have dropped slightly since the last reporting period but have remained roughly static over the last quarter and broadly in line with SN rates. Given the relatively low numbers of children involved, small changes have notable impacts upon the rate.	
	2	Child Protection Plans - Currently Open (Rate per 10,000 children)	61.6	59.9	63.5	Change from Previous Month	▼	See above	
	3	Cared for Children - Currently Open (Nos)	610	617		Change from Previous Month	▲	SEE ANALYSIS IN SUMMARY SECTION OF REPORT	
	3	Cared for Children - Currently Open (Rate per 10,000 children)	112.8	114.1	89	Change from Previous Month	▲	SEE ABOVE	
Timelessness	2	MASH Contacts Actioned within 24 Hours - in last 12 Months (%)	23.6	24.7		Change from Previous Month	▲		
	3	Assessments Completed within 45 Working Days - in last 12 Months (%)	68.2	66.5	89.2	Change from Previous Month	▼	SEE ANALYSIS IN SUMMARY SECTION OF REPORT	
	1	Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 Working Days - in last 12 Months (%)	86.3	83.5	82.5	Change from Previous Month	▼		
	3	Children in Need (Open) with a Visit within the last 20 Working Days (%)	62.8	62.0		Change from Previous Month	▼	See below in relation to challenges with CiN Cohort	
	1	Child Protection (Open) with a Visit within the last 20 Working Days (%)	92.5	89.5		Change from Previous Month	▼		
	1	Cared for Children (Open) with a Visit within Statutory Timescales (%)	91.0	92.2		Change from Previous Month	▲		
	3	Children in Need Plans Authorised within the last 20 Working Days (Localities Teams) (%)	52.1	52.0		Change from Previous Month	▼	Compliance in respect of CiN work remains challenged, although there is some evidence of improved figures around planning.	Decreasing staffing pressures in localities service as well as the embedding of independent oversight of CiN cohort

Effectiveness	2	Children with a Previous Referral within 12 months of their latest Referral - Rolling 12 Months (%)	26.5	26.5	21.1	Change from Previous Month	▲		
	2	Assessments Completed in last 12 Months with Outcome of No Further Action (%)	49.0	48.2		Change from Previous Month	▼	Figure continues to drop but at a slow rate. See analysis	
	1	Children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a subsequent time in last 12 Months (%)	16.4	18.3	25.1	Change from Previous Month	▲		
Management	2	Open Cases (CIN,CP,CfC) with Appropriate Case Supervision Recorded (%)	72.8	63.4		Change from Previous Month	▼	July has seen a slight dip in supervision figures compared to the 6 month high of 72%. This figure was achieved as a result of the focused prep work prior to the Ofsted visit, with the increase being driven by increases in cared for supervisions.	Ongoing focus on supervision compliance and quality as well as transition from 'inspection prep' uplifts to this being business as usual.
	2	All Open Cases (CIN,CP,CfC) with Appropriate Management Oversight Recorded (%)	67.7	56.1		Change from Previous Month	▼	See above	
	2	Average Caseload (NB: this data does not use FTE as it is not currently available and hence actual average caseload will be slightly higher than the figures reported here)	15.7	14.5		Change from Previous Month	▼	Although this figure is dropping, caseloads are not consistent across the service and areas of pressure remain. The number presented in this report is a simple calculation based upon number of cases divided by workers. It does not take into account working hours or roles (e.g. ATM with reduced caseload). Within the localities service few if any full time permanent workers have caseloads below 20	As of 31 <sup>st</sup> of August the first 7 international social workers will move into the localities service having completed their induction. Their development is continuing, and they will be allocated work at a pace that supports the development of their practice. Moving forward case load pressure will begin to be mitigated by the increasing number of these new workers.
	2	Vacancy Rate				Change from Previous Month	-	Between April and 24th August 2023 15 Social Workers commenced employment and 15 people have been offered places in the Academy to start later in the year.	The Improvement Team to baseline staffing for future reporting, This will take account of changes e.g. Early Help.
	2	Agency				Change from Previous Month	-		
	2	Sickness Absence	NA	7.74%		Change from Previous Month	▼		
	2	Cared for Children (Open) with 3 or more Placements (%)	10.3	10.5		Change from Previous Month	▲		
Outcomes	2	Cared for Children (Open) with 3 or more Social Workers (%)	14.1	16.0		Change from Previous Month	▲	This number has increased slightly over the last period, a number of these changes have been accounted for by planned changes of SW agreed by AD corporate parenting.	
	2	Care Experienced aged 19-21 Currently in Education, Employment, or Training (%)	45.6	45	50	Change from Previous Month	▼		



Quality Assurance

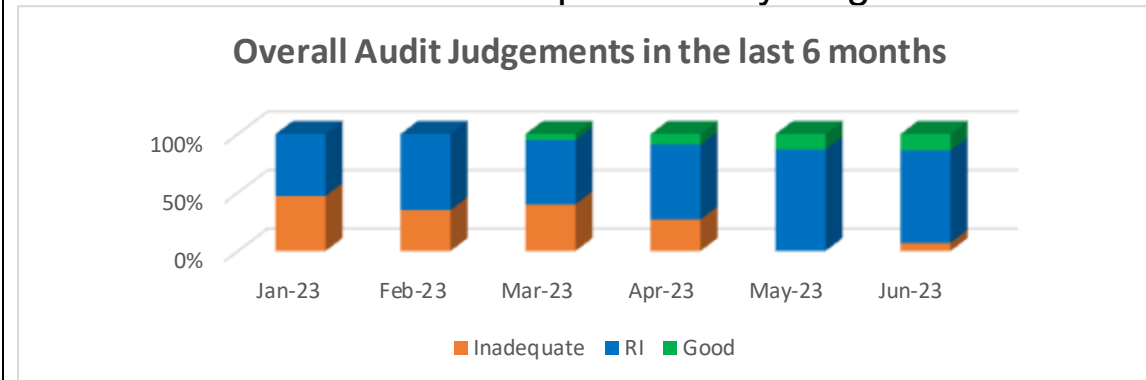
## Quality Assurance

In **June 2023**, **14 children's records** were audited from across the service. The theme was Children and Young People's contribution to plans and decision making which affects them. We knew from learning from previous audit that consultation and input from children and young people was not routinely obvious on their records and so we wanted to explore this further to inform practice improvement as their involvement is imperative to planning for their lives. The cohort selected for June 2023 consisted solely of cared for children and young people.

The overall audit judgements post moderation in **June 2023** were as follows:

June 2023	No. of Audits	%
Good	2	14%
RI	10	71%
Inadequate	2	14%

For the fourth consecutive month, we have seen audits with an overall judgement of 'Good' post moderation. In June, both good audits related to our involvement with care experienced young adults.



We saw our first grade of '**outstanding**' recorded for 'Relationship Based Practice and Direct Work' audit domain in June audit and a further **21%** of audits were judged '**Good**' in this area. This continues to be the strongest area of practice in Sefton.

Assessment and Multi Agency Planning, Review and Decision Making continues to be the key area for improvement. In Assessments for cared for children in June 2023, no audits were judged 'good' and **21%** of audits were graded 'Inadequate.' In planning, **21%** were graded 'Inadequate.' In addition to audit, 6 observations of practice were undertaken by the IRO Team Manager with a focus on children's and young people involvement in their cared for review meetings. We are routinely assigning observations as part of monthly audit activity to triangulate audit findings and increase opportunity to gain family and child feedback.

## Key Findings

### Strengths

- Evidence of Personal Advisors building trusting relationships with young adults, providing high levels of support, and empowering them to make informed choices about their future.
- Evidence from observations of children/young people attending their review meetings and having the opportunity to share their wishes and views.
- Evidence of the child/young person's wishes and feelings being well understood, and this has contributed to effective care planning.
- Evidence of good multi-agency working to improve outcomes for the child and promote stability.

- Examples of children being well cared for within their family network or in a foster home together with their sibling/s meeting their identity needs.
- Some parents, carers and young people reporting that they feel well supported by their Social Workers, feel listened to and that their views are reflected in the plan.
- Evidence of reflective supervision which enabled the worker to think differently about their approach to working with a young adult.

#### **Areas for Improvement**

- Absence of up-to-date assessment for cared for children which reflects their current situation and support needs. Some assessments lack analysis into the family history and the parents' own childhood experiences and how this impacted on the child's lived experience.
- Gaps in multi-agency care planning meetings to track progress with the child's care plan and prevent drift and delay.
- Delays in the child/young person achieving permanence. For some, reflective discussions on a more regular basis could have assisted in the decision to issue care proceedings at an earlier stage.
- General recording and visits would benefit from analysis of the information and actions to include timescales and ownership.
- From audit discussions, it is clear the Social Workers know the child/young person well and have an understanding of their likes/dislikes/wishes and feelings, but this is not always represented in the child's records and there is not always evidence of direct work to gather the child/young person's voice.
- Cared for Reviews/Pathway Plan reviews and recording of these are not always timely.
- There are examples of Cared for Reviews which are recorded in a child friendly way however some review notes include older language that is less child friendly e.g., "placement, approved foster carer, settled arrangements, proposed plan."
- Delays in Placement with Parents approval which could have impacted on stability for the child/young person.
- Supervision does not always track actions to prevent drift and does not evidence challenge regarding the gaps in care planning meetings.

In **July 2023**, 9 children's records were considered as part of audit from across the service. The low number of audits was due to the holiday season and priorities linked to Ofsted monitoring visit. 7 have been graded Requires Improvement to be Good and 2 Inadequate pre moderation. We saw some audits graded good in all domains save for management oversight and supervision and overall outcomes and impact. 22% of the sample were graded good for Relationship Based Practice and Direct Work which remains a strength. The domain for management oversight and supervision was 100% Requires Improvement to be Good; no Inadequate grades which is a notable improvement.

#### **Pace of Practice Improvement**

Assessment and planning are a known area for improvement across the service. Training is being delivered to relevant teams and managers to improve practice in this area with an emphasis on building relationships, ensuring, and creating safety, planning sessions with children and families with direct work, ongoing engagement from partners, regular check in points with managers and robust quality assurance. Plans should be co-produced with families who are clear why they are being assessed families should be provided with copies of assessments and plans. Assessment should not be a one-off event.

New information has been produced with support from education and health partners which will support family engagement and understanding moving forward. A pilot session has been delivered to our new International Social Workers and a first session to our Academy staff. A comprehensive delivery plan has been created with input from our Leeds partners who will support delivery alongside relevant Service Managers until December 2023. Dip sampling before and after training will support measurement of progress and follow up work on an individual and group basis depending on need. The Practice Improvement team will support this work.

The Quality Assurance and Impact Framework is now well embedded however close the loop activity needs to be improved with individual practitioners, Team Managers and Service Managers taking ownership for ensuring tasks are completed in a timely way to benefit children and families. Work is ongoing to embed this process.

Practice week is planned for 02.-05 October 2023. The theme will be Family First, Firm Foundations and Fulfilling Futures. There will be practitioner led events to raise awareness of the importance of understanding family and creating genograms. Mock Family Group Conferences will be shown during the week and a new video to support care planning. Our partners in Leeds will be facilitating some face-to-face training on achieving permanence and stability.

During the month of October, there will be ongoing observations of practice assigned as part of our monthly audit to consider understanding and promotion of permanence at different points in the child's journey. Seniors Leaders and cabinet members will be asked to support this. We will also be celebrating World Mental Health Day to support staff, Black History Month as part of our commitment to being an inclusive employee and National Care Leavers week also.

### **Capturing good practice**

From October 2023, we will reintroduce quarterly Performance and Practice Meetings with staff. This will allow for data to be considered, audit outcomes and good practice example to shared and discussed. A new Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement newsletter will launch in October 2023 to coincide with this first meeting. Top Tip papers will also be created and shared as appropriate and Practice Alerts. When managers audit, we know this improves their own awareness, practice, and oversight. Sessions are planned for September 2023 with the expectation that attendance will be prioritised.

Data and observation will continue to influence future thematic audit and dip sample which will be undertaken by Managers across the service, as well as the Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement Team.

Following the Ofsted monitoring visit some amendments have been made to the Quality Assurance Framework which will increase the number of people engaged in auditing, support and training offered to them to complete and the percentage of those cases which are subject to moderation. Observations will run parallel to audits, giving a richer view of practice, supporting the developing learning culture and giving a clear line of sight on practice.