

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 14 November 2017
Subject:	Bi -annual Progress report Children's Social Care Performance		
Report of:	Director of Social Care and Health	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Lead Member Children's Services, schools, families and safeguarding		
Is this a Key Decision:	N	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	N		

Summary:

In April 2016 an Inspection took place of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The report was published on 27th June 2016.

An action plan was developed that addressed the 11 recommendations made in that report and this was submitted to Ofsted in October 2016.

The plan has now been reviewed and updated to focus on current priorities to ensure that the service continues to improve and that all services provided to children are good or better and improve their outcomes.

The New plan was presented to Overview and scrutiny committee on 26th September 2017.

This report considers the performance score card that underpins the current plan.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Reports continue to be provided on a six monthly basis
- (2)
- (3)

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Over view and Scrutiny Committee have a key role in the governance of the plan and scrutiny of the performance and progress to ensure the service continues to improve and outcomes for children are improved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no direct revenue costs as a result of this report.

(B) Capital Costs

N/A

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
Legal Implications:
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Children's Social Care have a statutory duty to protect the most vulnerable
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Children's social care work with children and their families to improve outcomes for children
Commission, broker and provide core services: Children's Social care works in partnership with a range of organisations to ensure vulnerable children are safeguarded.
Place – leadership and influencer:

The scrutiny of Children’s Social Care performance supports the aspiration for all services for children to be good or better.
Drivers of change and reform: There has been significant focus on driving up standards of practice and linking and aligning resources with the Framework for Change
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children will support them to have aspirations and obtain economic independence
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD 4914/17) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD 4108/17) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Implementation Date for the Decision

With immediate effect. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee () has given approval under Rule 46 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules for the ‘call-in’ period to be waived in respect of the executive decision.

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Appendices:

Children’s Social Care performance Score Card

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Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 In April 2016 an Inspection took place of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The report was published on 27th June 2016.

An action plan was developed that addressed the 11 recommendations made in that report and this was submitted to Ofsted in October 2016. The plan has now been reviewed and updated to focus on current priorities and ensure that the service continues to improve to ensure that all services provided to children are good or better and improve their outcomes. As part of this process a number of new measures were added to the plan and score card where it was felt that performance needed to improve and some measures where there was continuing good performance were removed.

Due to the recent structures there are some measures that we have not been able to report on and this should be resolved for future reports, in addition so reports are still being developed where new measures have been introduced.

This report and the performance scorecard provides an overview of performance in the service against the three priorities in the improvement plan.

1. *Ensure frontline practice is consistently good, effective and focussed on timely, measureable outcomes for children.*
2. *To improve management oversight at all levels to ensure effective services for children and young people and that frontline staff receive good quality supervision.*
3. *Ensure that frontline services are sufficiently resourced and the workforce appropriately skilled to enable high quality work to be undertaken with children and young people.*

2. Progress against Priorities

- 2.1 Ensure frontline practice is consistently good, effective and focussed on timely, measureable outcomes for children.**

There have been a number of challenges over quarters 1 and 2 and performance in a number of areas requires improvement to be good. This has been impacted on by the restructure of the service as job roles have changed, managers are managing different teams with new areas of work and we fill additional social work posts created as part of the structure.

There is currently a renewed focus on the timeliness of assessments and that children are seen within 5 and 10 days of the start of assessment, we expect the performance to improve over quarters 3 and 4. The Service Manager is working with team managers to ensure they maintain the focus on performance whilst driving up quality. Positively we have seen an improvement in the quality of assessments.

The Local safeguarding Children's Board has commissioned an independent review of children on a child protection plan for two or more times. This is a system wide partnership issue and the review should help the partnership to understand where the child protection system needs to improve to effect positive change for children.

Considerable work has been undertaken in partnership with health to improve processes around Initial health assessments for looked after children and there is regular reporting to the Corporate Parenting Board. Health colleagues have implemented systems which should result in positive progress and there will be an audit at the end of quarter 3 to ensure that there is improvement in this area.

There has been an increase in the number of new entrants into care and analysis has been undertaken to understand this rise. This reflects both a regional and national picture. Positively, the numbers of children placed at home on full care orders continues to reduce though we do have an increasing number on interim care orders that are monitored to ensure the right plan and outcome is achieved for those children. Placement stability is positive and we do have more children placed with Sefton foster carers.

There has been a significant increase in adoption activity, we currently have 14 children placed for adoption and a further 14 who have a placement order, 5 children have been adopted in the year so far. Timeliness of adoption is generally good.

The young advisors have worked with the service to undertake consultation with children and families involved in child in Need and Child protection Services, this has been a really positive piece of work and action plans are now being developed in relation to the recommendations made by the young advisors.

There continues to be a focus on driving improvement in practice and performance. The Head of Service meets monthly with all managers to review performance, to understand pressures on the frontline teams but more importantly to look at solutions.

There is regular attendance at regional meetings to ensure that we research and understand models of good practice, recognising what works in other LA's. There will be a North West DCS peer review taking place in December which will provide both challenge and support to how we can improve.

We have also asked the Local Government Association to undertake a peer review in March 2018 which will involve a visit to Sefton by a peer review team and audit of cases in a similar methodology to Ofsted. There will be an initial set up meeting on 27th November 2017 to scope the review.

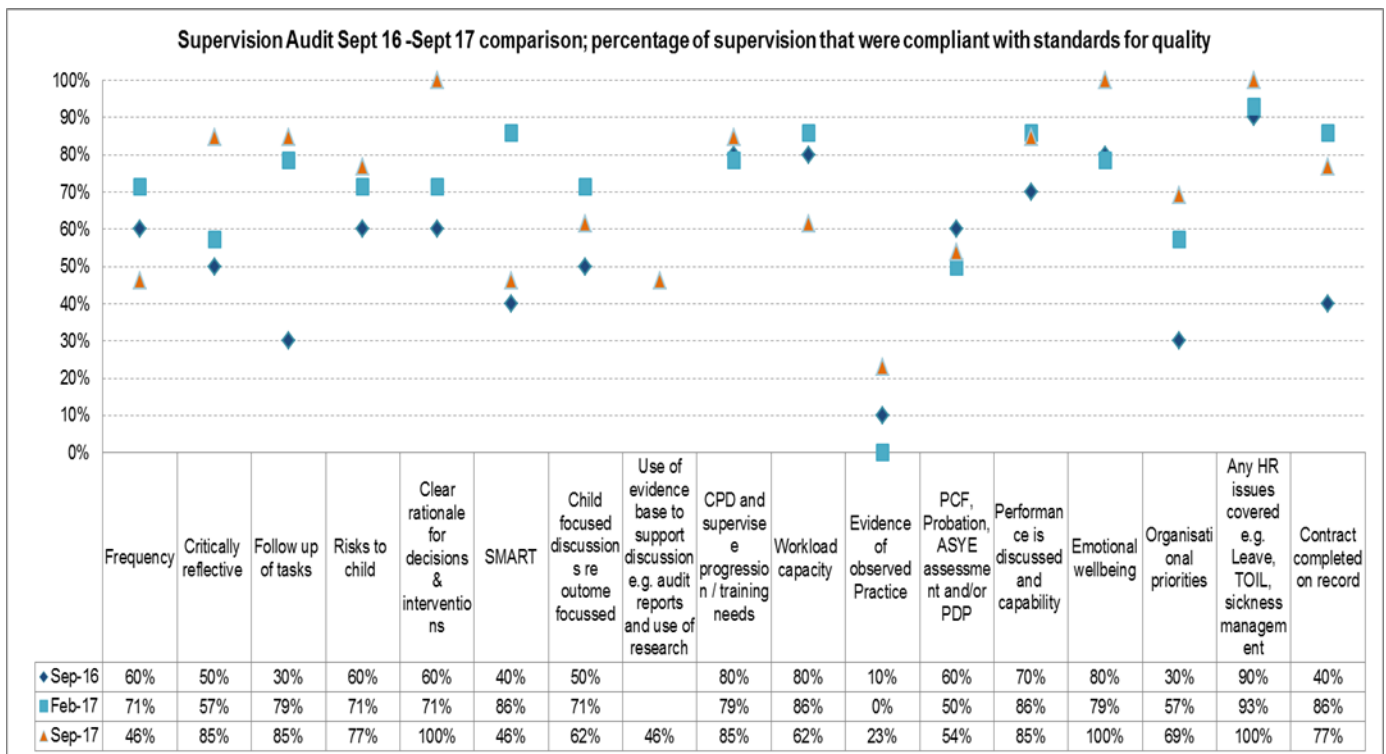
2.2 To improve management oversight at all levels to ensure effective services for children and young people and that frontline staff receive good quality supervision.

There continues to be strategic oversight and challenge to the service through Children and Young People Continuous Improvement Board which is chaired by the Chief Executive and includes the Cabinet Member, Director of Children’s Services, Chair of the safeguarding Board and the Chief Executive from Halton Council as a critical friend. This board provides scrutiny and challenge to the head of service and also meets with regularly with service managers.

During the focus on practice week in May 2017 the members of this board observed and reviewed operational practice, including attendance at Child protection Conferences, observations of Multi – Agency Safeguarding Hub and meeting with frontline workers.

There has been good progress in relation to operational management oversight and improving quality of supervision. A recent supervision audit found that 85% of supervision met the standard of good quality and reflective. Frequency of supervision did reduce during the period, predominantly due to the summer break and this will continue to be monitored.

The chart below demonstrates improvement across all the above areas in the latest audit with the exception of recordings that are SMART. This included supervision being critically reflective, evidence of improved recording with regards to: rationale for decision making, follow up of tasks and increased coverage of organisational priorities discussed as part of supervision. There was some evidence of observed practice in this audit which had previously been lacking. There was also evidence of more discussion regarding the emotional wellbeing of the supervisee.



There was one example provided as part of the supervision audit that is worth highlighting of how good quality supervision and management oversight had made a real difference to a practitioner who had previously been struggling. This was highlighted by the auditor but also by the practitioner themselves.

“[Social worker] was performing poorly in her previous team, since she has been supervised by [team manager] this has improved significantly, [social worker] acknowledges she has improved and presents as a motivated and committed SW and is blossoming under [team manager] tutelage”. (Service Manager)

*“I have been on a learning curve since joining the team and it’s an opportunity to check that I am complying with policies and procedures and to reflect on what I’ve done and could I have done it better.... It’s the best supervision I’ve had for a long time”
(Supervisee)*

2.3 Ensure that frontline services are sufficiently resourced and the workforce appropriately skilled to enable high quality work to be undertaken with children and young people.

The restructure of children’s social care has now taken place and was implemented as of 1st October 2017. The majority of posts have been filled and the teams are now adjusting to new ways of working. Positively this has seen an increase in front line managers, social workers and Independent reviewing officers which should support increased oversight and an improvement in both quality and performance.

The teams are aligned to the new Locality bases which should strengthen partnership working and our approach to early help.

The general picture is one of reducing caseloads for both social workers and IRO’s, (average caseloads of 20 and 75 respectively) though some individuals do have high caseloads and this is being closely monitored. Reducing caseloads does enable to deal effectively with individuals who are not performing to expected standards.

We have seen an increase in newly qualified social workers and whilst this does present some challenges initially it does provide us with an opportunity to develop the workforce and ensure that good quality work is undertaken.

Training and development for both social workers and managers remains a priority, induction is prioritised, managers have recently attended training session on managing risk and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Research in Practice will be providing training in November for our social workers in relation to planning for outcomes which we know is an area where we need to improve.

3 Summary and Conclusions.

We do recognise that there is still much to drive improvement in performance across all areas to ensure that outcomes for children continue to improve. Performance in a number of areas is not where we would want it to be and this will be the focus of the coming months. There are areas where we can see through audit that the quality of practice improving and we need to build on these to ensure consistency across the service.