

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL 26 July 2017

Performance Information

As of 15 June 2017:-

Current Children Looked After (LAC) figures are: 467 (146.1 per 10,000)

Current Child Protection (CP) figures are: 271 (84.8 per 10,000)

Current Children in Need (CIN) figures are: 1245 (389.5 per 10,000)

The rate per 10,000 is now being calculated using the mid 2015 population estimate of 31,964.

Believe in Families Children's Services Transformation

Children's Service's transformation plan aims to achieve a step change in service delivery, moving to a strengths based model with a change in underlying culture and practice. Families will be empowered to make their own changes when safe and possible to do so. The plan is ambitious, for the council and for the children and families of Middlesbrough

Change will be achieved through the development of a restorative approach to practice, rolled out to children's services and beyond, working better to improve lives, upskill families and reduce statutory (and other) interventions. Reduced demand for statutory services will result in financial savings to the Council in the longer term.

Middlesbrough Childrens Service's believe that families should be supported to stay together whenever it is safe for them to do so; working with families on their strengths can increase resilience, achieve and maintain positive change.

Believing in families means:

- * Families that need it get help earlier.
- * Fewer families enter safeguarding services.
- * Interventions with families build on their strengths and result in positive outcomes.
- * Risk is managed confidently and intensive support provided for families at the edge of care.
- * Intensive support is provided for families to return children home where it is safe to do so.

The transformation is supported though significant investment from the change fund, the focus being on improved strategic planning with partners and practice change across early help and children's care. Staff are being briefed and next steps are the recruitment of a Childrens Service's Change Team to work alongside operational staff to devise and implement the detailed plans and drive change.

First Contact and RAD unit

The Local Authority is experiencing an increase in the complexity of work within the safeguarding department. What a comparison of statistics from 2016 to 2017 tells us that there is a decline in the number of referrals coming in to the First Contact Team, a slight decline in the number of active children who are in need (March 2016 there were 1357 and 1258 in March 2017). However there has been an increase in children subject to a Child Protection Plan from 256 to 283 in March 2017. There is also an increase in children who were looked after from 329 in March 2016 to 467 currently. The increase in complexity means an increase in workload and additional pressures on all areas of the department. There is an increase in need to provide intense assessment and support in the Assessment, Care Planning and specialist services, there is an increased pressure on the Independent Reviewing Service, placements, the Looked After Team, Fostering service, all of whom are essential to supporting and managing risk within the families affected.

Assessment and Care Planning

Social work interviews have been held and, although not all posts have been recruited to, a number of newly qualified but good candidates have been recruited.

It is hoped that more experienced workers may apply in the next few weeks due to the change in tax law for agency workers. This will be positive for Local Authorities and bring experience back into LA social work and out of agency work. In order to reduce the number of agency social workers used across the service, a paper has been approved to over-recruit 4 peripatetic workers who can move around the service and move to areas of need when required. They would cover areas such as maternity, sickness, vacancies or high level of caseload need.

Due to the number of social workers required to cover gaps at present, Team Managers are focussing upon seeing children and ensuring plans are in place. This has meant that some timescales for assessment have slipped, however once fully staffed it is expected this will be rectified.

Training & Development

We have recently appointed a new manager to support our newly qualified social workers in their first year of employment who will started early May. As a Council we attract a good level of newly qualified social workers who go on to remain with the Council after passing their assessed year in practice. Our initiative is valued by social workers and viewed as good practice. To support wider social work recruitment and promoting the north east of England we are part of a regional drive to attract workers to the north east. We are attended, with our regional colleagues, the Compass Job fair in Manchester in May. This was a specialist social work recruitment event.

Specialist Services

The **short break consultation** process has concluded and a report is now being produced with analysis of responses, with the options and impact for the council. This will be taken through SSMT, DMT and LMT for final sign off by Executive Members by the end of August 2017.

Children with Disabilities – the additional capacity for Occupational Health (i.e. 1 x FTE cost met from Change Fund for 12 month post) has had a significant impact. There is now no waiting list for the service and, where intervention was taking up to six months, work is now allocated within a day of referral and visit to the family within two weeks to progress. A detailed report is being produced to evidence the business case for this becoming a permanent position.

The Regional Adoption Agency (Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency – TVRAA) work has progressed to producing a proposed operational structure and costings. The 'go live' date for the Agency is December 2017, however there is outstanding work to be completed on the differential between baseline costs (current) versus proposed structure, which is significant.

Fostering – there has been an increasing flow of Foster Carers coming to Middlesbrough from independent fostering agencies, representing approximately 80% of all current enquires. There are 10 carers (ex IFA) currently being assessed to be Middlesbrough carers. The feedback from those carers is that the IFAs have become too 'regionalised' making the support they offer somewhat distant. Some of those coming to the LA are caring for Middlesbrough children already (there will be a saving on the management fee to the IFA) and wish to offer placements to more of our children.

Adoption – all Middlesbrough children currently awaiting an adoptive placement have a match approved or soon to be approved by panel. There are more awaiting the leave of the court to be adopted for whom there is no Middlesbrough adopter, and the team, along with marketing colleagues, are busy recruiting for those children.

CiCC Apprentice – the Chief Executive has agreed to meet the costs of SA's continued apprenticeship with the council, specifically with the Pathways team, to enable her to conclude her 3 year qualification. This will come from the 'corporate initiatives' budget.

Partnerships

Following the publication of the Charlie Taylor review of youth justice and the subsequent government response in late 2016, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) is expected to send strategic level communication to Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services and Chairs of Youth Offending Management Boards to outline proposed national reforms to youth justice. At a local level South Tees Youth Offending Service remains on track to publish its partnership strategic plans for next year in line with statutory requirements.

South Tees Youth Offending Service (STYOS) has recently received the annual results from the 'e-survey' questionnaire. The 'e-survey' is a questionnaire every young person subject to a court ordered intervention completes at the end of their sentence. STYOS were extremely pleased with these results as they show the 'voice of the child' was listened to, as evidenced in the following ways:

- 100% of the young people questioned stating they had 'had enough say in 'what went in to my supervision, or sentence plan'
- 91% stated the YOS had 'took my views seriously' and;
- 84% stated '*My work with the Youth Offending Team has made me realise change is possible*'.

Councillor Michael Carr
Executive Member, Children's Social Care