

Name of meeting: Cabinet

Date: 24th May 2016

Title of report: Update on Family Support and Child Protection

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes / No or "not applicable" If yes give the reason why
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	Key Decision – No Private Report/Private Appendix – Yes/No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by Chief Executive	Adrian Lythgo 12 th May 2016
Date signed off by <u>Director</u> & name	Sarah Callaghan 11 th May 2016
Is it also signed off by the Director of Resources?	David Smith 11 th May 2016
Is it also signed off by the Assistant Director (Legal Governance and Monitoring)?	Julie Muscroft 10 th May 2016
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Erin Hill 10 th May 2016

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted:

Public or private:

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 This report is provided to update members on the position of the Family Support and Child Protection Service. It updates Cabinet on steps taken to develop social work practice and management in Kirklees. Specifically it outlines issues that have been identified relating to social work practice and management, the actions already taken and key priorities for the Service going forward.

1.2 The report:

- Explains the background
- Summarises the main themes of practice development required
- Provides assurance that issues identified are being addressed and are subject to appropriate and ongoing challenge and scrutiny
- Seeks resources to support the Development Programme

2.0 Introduction

2.1 A rigorous internal review of services began in late 2015 arising from the events listed below:

- The known retirement date of the Director for Children and Young People and recruitment of a new Director agreed in March 2015
- A Safeguarding Board audit of practice in August 2015
- The planned retirement of the long standing Assistant Director for Family Support and Child Protection agreed in August 2015
- The planned recruitment of an interim Assistant Director in November 2015 to provide continuity and quality oversight during a period of change.
- A number of instances of apparent poor practice coming to light in Dec 2015.

Activity has included:

- Audits
- Case discussions
- Direct observations
- External reviews

2.2 This review identified issues associated with the way cases are recorded and managed.

2.3 The level of change to both culture and practice is not underestimated and we are clear about the scale of change needed. It cannot all be addressed immediately, but there have been a number of changes within senior management to ensure that the right staff are in place to deliver and sustain improvements.

2.4 In order to gain a fuller understanding of practice, audit activity was immediately initiated. The aim of the audit activity was to establish whether or not the practice concerns were more widespread throughout the service or localised in the teams based at the front door.

3.0 Practice Development Required

3.1 Findings were collated from case files covering the following areas:

- Referrals
- Section 47 enquiries, (multi agency meetings to determine whether a case is escalated to child protection)
- Children in Need
- Child Protection Plans
- Looked After Children
- Children with Disabilities

3.2 The audits sought to answer the following questions:

- Where children known to Children's Social Care were identified as being at risk, was there evidence that risk was identified and managed in line with legal, statutory and local protocols?

- Was there evidence of continuous, active work with families that improves outcomes?
- Was practice focused on the needs and experiences of children and influenced by their wishes and feelings?
- What was the nature of the relationship between children and families and their social workers?
- Were children and families engaged in all actions and decisions relating to them and did they understand the intentions of the help they received?
- Did children and young people receive help that is proportionate to risk?
- Did assessments result in direct work with families that addressed identified need?
- Was all activity described by the social worker reflected in the case recording?
- Was there evidence of management decision-making and oversight?

3.3 Where auditors had concerns about a case, they followed an escalation protocol to ensure remedial action was taken. Twenty two cases were escalated through this process and immediate action has been taken to evidence that the child has been effectively safeguarded and the concerns addressed. In all other cases records have been amended and necessary steps taken to rectify recording and management.

3.4 The Safeguarding Board also undertook some audit activity in relation to child protection cases and they established concerns about practice, in particular relating to the slow allocation and response to cases.

3.5 Some of the key themes identified relate to; the absence of consistent management oversight, failure to record, and inconsistent assessment quality and recording.

3.6 Audits also highlighted that the voice of the child was not sufficiently evident and that children and their families were not consistently or sufficiently involved in the assessment and planning function and the visits to children and young people were not always recorded on the electronic file though they were sometimes present in paper records.

3.7 Risk assessment quality was deemed to be inconsistent and this was sometimes coupled with drift and delay in progressing cases.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 Many issues identified through the auditing process related to the quality of practice that is being addressed through the following actions:

- All open cases to have an allocated social worker from the point that the referral is accepted through to the closure of the case.
- Social workers to have consistently manageable case-loads.
- Consistent application of thresholds at all stages of involvement.
- Prioritisation of child protection concerns to ensure children are seen in the required timescale and action taken to safeguard them.
- All children are visited in a timely way, visits are recorded and any actions identified are followed up.
- Every child to have all the required documentation on file, for example, assessment, care plan, chronology.
- Work with partners to improve the quality of referrals to increase social work capacity.
- Visible leadership, where managers walk the floor, know the staff and their work and look for ways of supporting them.

- Implementing a clear system for checking that completed work is timely and to the agreed standard.
- Continue engagement sessions with the staff and the regular newsletter approach that is keeping them engaged with the improvement journey. Provide evidential data that shows them the improvement trajectory to maintain morale.
- Improve data quality to allow rigorous oversight of key practice areas.

5.0 Developments Undertaken Including Ongoing Challenge

- 5.1 It is important to note that the areas for development identified through the auditing process are not applicable to all practice, but the expectation is that the same high standards of quality should be evident in all caseloads, and this is the objective of the thorough action plan developed to achieve this.
- 5.2 Some of these actions are more progressed than others as some require long term, cultural change within the workforce that will take time to embed.
- 5.3 To ensure this happens, regular performance clinics are scheduled so that staff are supported to understand what good practice looks like.
- 5.4 Workshops have been run with all relevant staff, including the Safeguarding Unit to raise awareness of the key practice issues. Findings have also been translated into a Learning Action Plan. This resulted in some immediate training for staff in relation to child protection compliance.
- 5.5 A new Leadership Team is in place, which includes the new Director for Children and Young People and Interim Assistant Director for Family Support and Child Protection and this is complemented with Heads of Service who have the skills and experience to make the improvements needed to practice.
- 5.6 A Development Board was introduced in February 2015, which is chaired by the Chief Executive, to oversee a programme of improvement. The development plan prioritises the most important actions and activities, with clear success criteria, to demonstrate outcomes for children and families. The membership includes the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board, Police and Director of Public Health.
- 5.7 The Board is supported by a new Operational Group, a cycle of improvement and clear governance arrangements led by the new Director for Children and Young People. This ensures that the Development Board can exercise robust scrutiny and challenge whilst maintaining pace and monitoring improvements. To ensure that changes made to improve the quality of practice are fully embedded, additional measures have been put in place, such as the monitoring of activity of cases, that are systematically checked and where activity has not been updated, social workers are challenged.
- 5.8 The evidence to support the improvement of practice is not reliant on data. There is a parallel focus on establishing a culture of high expectations and accountability and this includes regular and thematic training for staff.
- 5.9 As Cabinet asked, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has agreed to establish an Ad-Hoc Panel to consider and challenge the work of the Development Board and to ensure that the improvement journey is owned by all parties. It has held its first meeting and further meetings are planned through the Spring and Summer.

- 5.10 We are also engaged in dialogue with a Regional Improvement Partner about direct support and longer term embedding of change.
- 5.11 The service has introduced Practice Standards, which are supported by the recently reviewed and amended Quality Assurance Framework. The framework significantly enhances scrutiny, oversight and challenge to the performance of the workforce. This is exercised at all levels within the service and includes the Lead Member for Family Support and Child Protection. The exacting demands of the framework are leading to improving data and performance information to support managers to deliver good practice and improve outcomes.
- 5.12 The Supervision Framework has been reviewed and will be launched in May. Frontline staff have absolutely recognised and are embracing the importance of good quality reflective supervision.
- 5.13 The recording and management system has improved functionality and a new system is in procurement. It is expected that this will be in place by the end of the year and further developments to practice will come with the improved functionality of a new system.
- 5.14 A development programme is in place for both managers and senior managers alongside a programme of engagement events to allow meaningful communication between the service and the workforce. The Workforce Development Strategy has been reviewed and will deliver training in a planned way that is relevant to the staffing requirements and will be linked to the Risk Sensible Model, which will be the chosen practice model for Kirklees.
- 5.15 As a matter of priority we have established a short-life project team with representatives covering all 'specialisms'. This project will develop a protocol to ensure that, practice is consistently guided by the child's voice.
- 5.16 This group will consider these issues in relation to all children, including those who are pre-speech, have a disability or whose first language may not be English.
- 5.17 We have begun a service remodel, which will include a single point of entry into the service and a reconfiguration of social work teams to support the Single Assessment Model. This will streamline decision making so that children are supported to have more stable placements, instead of being moved from one to another because a fully informed decision was not made in the first place. To enable this, the remodel will be supported by reviews of the current threshold document, referral form and associated systems and processes.
- 5.18 To support front line practitioners to make the improvements needed a team of 'Practice Champions' is being implemented. They will work alongside social workers to provide mentoring and coaching working with the Principal Social Worker.
- 5.19 The Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a member of the Development Board and the Safeguarding Board itself will overview progress consistent with its role. To be assured that the Safeguarding Board is able to carry out this important role, a review of the performance of the Safeguarding Board is being undertaken. This will build on the peer review, which took place in autumn 2015 and the action plan for improvement agreed.

- 5.20 The Development Board have agreed an extension of the audit activity, which is now supported by a small team of interim auditors who have been trained to appropriate standards. They will be able to report on progress and improvement from the initial audit findings. Audit activity will increasingly focus on new cases into the Service to check that learning and development is being rapidly embedded.
- 5.21 The approach to redesign has adopted a twin approach of accountability and support, where the focus is on equipping staff with the right tools to support them to put the right help in place at the right time through the introduction of practice standards clearly demonstrating what good looks like, whilst also addressing any issues of inconsistent practice
- 5.22 The changes in practice and culture that are needed require a long term approach. There is a significant amount of practice and cultural change needed to bring practice up to the required standard. This requires cultural change to recognise the importance of data recording and consistent capture of data as well as changes to the systems used. Practice improvement is dependent on having access to accurate data and performance information. Essential data, such as whether or not children have been visited, caseload numbers, whether or not a case has had any activity or accurate information relating to the child in need cohort, is not easily captured. This information is currently being tracked manually which is labour intensive and difficult to maintain with different teams recording data in different ways.
- 5.23 The development of the workforce is fundamental to the improvement journey and this is an area that will need high levels of focus and training, so the results will not be instant. To lend some pace to the development of practice, additional staff have been recruited to share best practice and expertise. This additional resource will need to remain in place and further social work capacity will need to be recruited to ensure caseloads are at a manageable level.
- 5.24 Focussed activity is being undertaken to rapidly improve the quality of social work practice and there is evidence of improvement in several areas. Data and performance information is improving and this is helping to focus key activity, which has resulted in more timely allocations and completion of assessments. For instance:
- There is an improving trend in the total number of unallocated cases
 - The proportion of Child Protection and Looked After Children cases unallocated has improved, with 99.8% of LAC cases allocated and 100% of CP cases allocated (as per the most recent monthly performance report)
 - The rate of repeat referrals is highlighting some improvement, with the expectation that this will improve further through the introduction of a revised 'Contact Form' as currently all contacts are considered as referrals.
- 5.25 The workforce are engaged with the improvement journey and they have welcomed the Practice Standards and the development and training activities that are being put in place.

6.0 Resources

- 6.1 The mechanism used to identify necessary resources to support development has been for the Chief Executive to exercise his urgent delegation with the Development Board papers and minutes providing the evidence for decisions.

6.2 The additional resources approved to date are:

- Resources to support the development of Practice Champions, recruited from within the service to model and embed good practice.
- Resources to enable a Head Of Service to be seconded for six months from Adults Services to lend expertise around quality assurance
- Resources to support the secondment of a data analyst from Adult Services for six months to enable effective scrutiny and challenge of data
- 2 additional data Information Officers to address the issues with the functionality of the system so that it is fit for purpose.
- 2 additional Grade 7 Business Support Officers, for a period of 6 months

6.3 The resources to support the improvement journey are covered in the Provisional Outturn Report elsewhere on this agenda.

6.5 Cabinet are also asked to note the critical relationship between early help for vulnerable children and the ongoing cross Council redesign of Early Intervention and Prevention.

7.0 Officer Recommendations

7.1 The officer recommendations are that members:

- Note the content of this report and the current position of the Family Support and Child Protection Service.
- Recognise the actions taken to date and the actions going forward that have been planned to address issues identified.
- Approve the next steps.
- Approve the resource allocation highlighted in Section six.

8.0 Cabinet Portfolio Holder Recommendation

Cllr Erin Hill, Cabinet member for Family Support and Child Protection:

8.1 These issues in the service came to light during a review of practice initiated by our own leadership team. We immediately took action to begin addressing the concerns and, whilst some aspects of practice will take some time to change, we are already seeing some improvements.

8.2 The audit and review work is continuing to look at all of the systems and processes within children's social care and the plan will continue to be developed to ensure that practice standards are raised across all areas of the service

- 8.3 The priority of members and officers is to ensure all the necessary improvements are made with pace, but in a way that is sustainable for the future. Our most immediate step is to ensure that children in our system have their needs met without delay and that safeguarding action is taken when it is needed.
- 8.4 A comprehensive programme of work is taking place to enhance management oversight and wider social work practices. Some of the work involves longer-term cultural change for the organisation and we are confident that the reshaped leadership team, including the new Director and Interim Assistant Director, are well equipped to deliver the required outcomes. There is also strong governance in place, led by the Development Board.
- 8.5 I endorse the officer recommendations and wish to make clear our huge commitment to providing the best possible standards for the children, young people and families of Kirklees.

Contact Officers

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Ofsted Single Framework Inspection

Ofsted launched the Single Inspection Framework in November 2013.

To date, Kirklees have not had an inspection under this framework. The inspections are unannounced, with just one day's notice and therefore the expectation is that we will be ready to respond once an inspection commences. The next inspection rounds are:

- 23 May 2016
- 13 June 2016
- 4 July 2016
- 12 September 2016

The inspection will consider the key aspects of a child's journey through the child protection system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person, including the early help offer and the effectiveness of the help and protection they are receiving.

It will also focus on the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements as well the work we do across our services, for example identifying children who are suffering, or likely to suffer harm from abuse or neglect; and for the provision of early help where it is needed. It will also consider the effectiveness of the local authority and its partners in protecting these children if the risk remains or escalates.

Ofsted will look at evidence that outlines the extent to which we work together to help and protect children and young people, including the effectiveness of information sharing.

It is expected that all local authorities will be at least 'good', therefore the judgement of 'adequate' has been removed and replaced with 'requires improvement'. Inspectors will make judgements using the following four-point scale.

There are three key judgements. These are protecting children, looked after children and achieving permanence, leadership, management and governance. And two graded judgements - adoption and care leavers. A judgement of 'inadequate' in any of the three key judgements, limits the judgement of overall effectiveness to 'inadequate'.

Outstanding	a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good	a service that exceeds minimum requirements
Requires Improvement	a service that meets minimum requirements
Inadequate	a service that does not meet minimum requirements