

Report of Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel - Children's Services

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1. RATIONALE FOR THE REVIEW

1.1 With the impending retirement of the Director for Children and Young People and the Assistant Director for Families and Child Protection in March 2016, a casework audit was commissioned to sample casework being undertaken by social workers within the Children and Young People's Directorate. This work commenced in August 2015, with the aim that the findings of the audit would help inform areas of focus for the new directorate leadership team. In addition to the appointment of a new Director for Children's Services and an Acting Assistant Director, Family Support and Child Protection, political leadership has also changed with the appointment of a new Cabinet Portfolio Holder in May 2015.

The audit identified an inconsistency in casework management and recording. This meant that when assessed against current Ofsted criteria, some cases were deemed inadequate. Furthermore the current performance monitoring data had not been sufficient to highlight these discrepancies at the earliest opportunity. The Chief Executive was clear that the inconsistencies needed to be addressed and practitioners provided with the necessary support and tools to meet the required standards for casework management. In addition, with the appointment of a new Director for Children and Young People to bring a fresh perspective to practice in Kirklees, there was an opportunity to undertake wider development work as part of embedding an updated framework. A Development Board, led by the Chief Executive was established to prioritise and take forward a programme of development work.

It was considered important that the work of the Development Board was subject to the independent challenge of Overview and Scrutiny. Consequently in May 2016 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee established the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel - Children's Services with a very specific focus, as set out in terms of reference below.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Membership of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Julie Stewart -Turner (Chair)
Councillor Robert Light
Councillor Andrew Marchington
Councillor Amanda Pinnock
Reverend Richard Burge - Statutory Scrutiny Co-optee
Dale O'Neill - Voluntary Scrutiny Co-optee

2.2 Terms of Reference of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel

The approved terms of reference of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel - Children's Services are set out below:

1. To consider the work programme of the Children's Development Board within the Term of Reference set for it.
2. To challenge the prioritisation of the work of the Board and contribute ideas on the achievement of the programme.
3. To comment on the performance framework developed to provide oversight for the work of the Board.
4. To assist the portfolio holders for Children's Services in providing Councillor input to the development programme.
5. To consider the fit of identified development work with the developing Early Intervention and Prevention (EI&P) approach within New Council Programme.

The Task Group was supported by Penny Bunker and Yolande Myers from the Governance and Democracy and Governance Service.

2.3 How the work was carried out:

The Panel used a range of methods to gather the evidence that has been used to inform this report. Between May and October 2016 the Panel held 11 meetings with the following people attending one or more meetings to give evidence on the work of the Development Board or one of the areas of focus:

Adrian Lythgo – Chief Executive (Chair of the Development Board)

Sarah Callaghan – Director for Children and Young People

Carly Speechley – Assistant Director, Family Support and Child Protection

Debbie Hogg – Assistant Director, Resources

Toni Traynor – Head of Service, Family Support and Child Protection

Bron Sanders – Independent Chair of Safeguarding Children Board (member of Development Board)

Chief Superintendent Steve Cotter – West Yorkshire Police (member of Development Board)

Marion Gray - Learning and Organisational Development Manager

Catherine Harrison – Principal Social Worker and QA Manager

Carol Lancaster – Head of Programme (Schools as Community Hubs)

Donald Cumming - Deputy Headteacher, Holmfirth High School

Site visits:

2 site visits were made to Family Support and Child Protection Services based at Riverbank Court, Huddersfield. One to meet with social work practitioners and a second to meet with first tier social work managers.

A visit was also made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub also based at Riverbank Court, Huddersfield.

Supporting information:

The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel also considered a wide range of supporting information. This included the findings of the two part Munro Report, commissioned by national government to undertake an independent review of child protection.

The Ad Hoc Panel tracked the work of the Development Board through notes of meetings and the sharing of some performance information including data that enables managers to oversee aspects of casework management performance in line with practice expectations. A full list of the supporting information is attached at appendix 1 of this report.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Background to the Children's Services Development Board

The aim of the Children's Services Development Board is to provide a focus on Children's Services as part of the Council's wider strategies. Kirklees Council is moving towards embedding a New Council model that requires all staff to deliver high quality services to support children, adults and communities and help them achieve the best outcomes in life. An integral part of the new council approach is early intervention and prevention which enables communities to do more for themselves whilst keeping vulnerable people safe.

3.2 The Council needs to ensure that staff within Children's Services are equipped with the correct skills, knowledge and management support to fulfil their role in shaping the future of children and young people. The Children's Services Development Board was established to:

- Drive the delivery of the Development Plan to ensure that the highest quality services are delivered to children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers in Kirklees
- Ensure that practice standards are improved with the aim to achieve excellence in practice.
- To bring about cultural change in order to cement the necessary changes for the long term.

The Children's Services Development Board meets on a three weekly basis to oversee a programme of improvement work and is able to allocate additional resources where appropriate. Performance measures have been established to ensure the board is clearly focused on seeing progress against the desired outcomes in the identified improvement areas.

It is envisaged that the development process will take up to two years with phases of work being staggered. The initial focus is on compliance, timeframes and ensuring that the voice of the child is heard within cases.

3.3 The detailed objectives of the Children's Services Development Board are:

1. To provide the framework for the delivery of excellence in social care practice and provision of the highest quality services for children, young people and their families
2. To keep children and young people in Kirklees safe
3. To oversee the implementation of the Children's Services Improvement Plan and provide assurance that service risks are being managed and are reducing
4. To ensure identified actions are carried out in a timely manner and demonstrate positive impact on children
5. To ensure member oversight and challenge for the Plan
6. To steer managers to demonstrate effective management grip of Children's Services
7. To identify and agree key performance measures which will demonstrate impact
8. To challenge the pace and quality of progress, in terms of both actions and the impact of those actions
9. To revise and amend actions where necessary to accelerate improvement
10. To report progress on implementation of the Plan to the Council's Executive Management Team and ensure alignment with New Council governance arrangements.
11. To report progress of the Plan to Children's Services Portfolio holder Briefings, Kirklees Children's Safeguarding Board, the Children's Trust, Council Scrutiny Committee as appropriate
12. To identify and monitor key risks associated with the implementation of the Plan
13. To monitor the financial implications of the Plan
14. To communicate effectively with all teams, partner organisations and other stakeholders

The Views of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel on the work of the Children's Services Development Board

3.4 The Scrutiny Panel supports the rationale for establishing a Development Board to drive forward the changes to practice and other priority areas of improvement. Evidence indicates that the Development Board, led by the Chief Executive and the new Director for Children and Young People has created a momentum for change and provided a fresh perspective in addressing the priority areas of practice.

The energy and commitment of officers leading the work directed by the Board is very evident. It is beneficial that the work is supported by partners and an external consultant who have brought a different perspective and ensure the Board itself has an internal challenge. The Scrutiny Panel has seen evidence of the ongoing development of the Development Board's Plan.

The priorities and work of the Board have been informed by the findings of the ongoing audit of previous and current cases. The audit has found some areas of good practice but a significant percentage of cases have fallen below expectations and are deemed inadequate.

Keeping children and young people in Kirklees safe

3.5 It is an underpinning aim for all Kirklees councillors and council services to ensure that children and young people in Kirklees are safe. The panel recognises the difficult work environment of the social work teams and their commitment to the work that they do. The commitment of staff was strongly communicated to members of the Scrutiny Panel when they visited and spoke to frontline staff at Riverside Court.

Whilst acknowledging there have been problems with the structure and management of cases, when the Panel asked the question about the safeguarding implications, it was assured that from the cases sampled, no children had been harmed. Since new practice has been adopted there is an ongoing audit of casework. The Panel would like to continue to monitor the progress in raising the standard of casework.

The Panel agreed that the voice of the child had always been heard in Kirklees through various forums, but a more granular approach was looking at the voice of the child to be sure that it is making a difference to social work practice, and that the Council can measure the difference it was making to the children.

4. Providing the framework for the delivery of excellence in social care practice

4.1 The evidence indicates that the Board has developed a multi strand approach to ensure an updated framework is in place for the delivery of social care practice and the provision of services to children and young people and their families. The Scrutiny Panel has chosen to look in depth at the following areas of focus:

- Improving and embedding compliant practice standards
- Effective reflective management and supervision
- Referral thresholds and mechanisms
- Reviewing performance management information and processes
- Workforce Strategy
- Partnership working including the role of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- IT infrastructure to support casework management
- The ongoing management and sustainability of the measures and practice put in place as part of the development work

Improving practice

4.2 Given the issues raised by the casework audits, the Board recognised the need to prioritise the compliance and casework management issues. The Board prioritised the comprehensive Practice Standards document which was produced to provide staff with clarity on “what does good look like”. It provides guidance to all staff about standards and expectations which, once clearly understood and embedded, provides the yardstick against which performance can be measured and managed.

The Panel noted that in line with the requirements of the Munro Report, the voice of the child should be clearly heard and recorded as part of casework. Early audits indicate that there is a lack of consistency in recording the views of the child. Senior managers acknowledged that this must be a key area of improvement within Kirklees social work practice.

4.3 The Panel is impressed that the practice standards were put in place very early in the development process and welcomes the positive and supportive way in which they were introduced to staff. The panel also notes how staffing resources have been realigned to ensure that there are adequate resources to facilitate training in the new standards, both with formal sessions but also through the use of a peer mentoring approach.

4.4 When the practice standards manual was launched, all staff were given the opportunity to provide feedback to managers on the document. To support this, a number of staff focus sessions took place to ensure an ongoing dialogue with social workers. Feedback indicated that staff welcomed the document as it clearly set out practice expectations and as such staff could be confident they were meeting expectations.

When panel members met with staff at Riverbank Court, including some who had undertaken their training with Kirklees, it was emphasised that some staff felt the practice standards formalised what they were already doing.

4.5 It is the Panel’s view that of equal importance to the embedding of compliant practice standards is the need to ensure that the standards have been successfully implemented and continue to be followed. The Director for Children and Young People emphasised the parallel work to ensure that reflective supervision is also in place for all staff as a means of

monitoring compliance but also of embedding an on going reflective, learning culture within the service (see more information on support arrangements at section 5) .

The Ad Hoc Panel also considered the importance of appropriate case work volumes. It was noted that the statistical average case load is 18.5 cases per social worker. However in allocating caseloads there are other issues to be considered including adjusting caseloads for newly qualified social workers. Within social work there are a number of teams with individuals specialising in particular areas. Some teams carry heavier caseloads than others and cases vary in complexity. A report to the June 2016 meeting of the Scrutiny Panel indicated that the current workload position in Kirklees stood at approximately 300 cases per week, with an average of 17.5 cases per social worker. Newly qualified social workers have a target of 10 cases.

In June 2016 the Panel was also informed that the managers were beginning to review cases that were undertaken since the practice standards had been put in place.

Of equal importance to the Panel is the need to ensure that whilst procedures are compliant and there is demonstrable good practice in casework management, there is the same level of assurance for practice, ie when social workers are working directly with children and families. How will the service identify where improvement is needed?

Panel Findings

4.6 The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel is concerned at the results of the initial case audits and the volume of cases that fell below requirements and were rated inadequate. However it is noted that there were also examples of good practice amongst the case audits. The panel received assurance that no child had been unsafe as a result of the inadequate practise in some areas.

4.7 The Panel agrees that one of the immediate priorities of the Development Board is to address the fundamental casework assessment and management issues to ensure compliance and assurance that all referrals are being dealt with in a timely and appropriate way. Initial evidence indicated that practice is inconsistent but it can now be seen that the introduction of the standards manual and on going support to staff is helping to update standards in line with current procedural requirements and good practice.

4.8 The Panel supports the work to ensure that the voice of the child is reflected in casework. There needs to be a consistent approach adopted to ensure that casework accurately reflects the voice of all children of all ages, rather than being an interpretation or summary.

4.9 The Panel recognises the valuable and demanding work that social workers do and feels that the previous lack of a practice standards manual has compounded the pressure on staff. The Panel is greatly concerned that the recommendations arising from the Monro

Report had previously not been consistently embedded in practice. Although as Munro herself reflects;

“ Working Together to Safeguard Children is the core guidance for multi agency working. The document is now 55 times longer than it was in 1974. One of the reasons for this growth has been the inclusion of professional advice alongside statutory guidance.”

Consequently Munro stated that;

“ statutory guidance to become a shorter manual in which the core principles and rules are clearer to all professionals”.

This supports the approach taken by Kirklees in developing its practice standards manual.

4.10 The Panel welcomes that as a consequence of the outcomes of the case audits, a practice standards manual was developed to provide a comprehensive foundation and reference document for staff. Going forward there needs to be a clear mechanism for review of the document to ensure it is kept up to date and reflects any new legislative requirements or good practice guidance in a timely way.

The Panel recognises the need for the initial standards manual to be a comprehensive document. However it would be appropriate to have a more succinct “at a glance” guide for staff to ensure it continues to be a quick point of reference to check procedural issues. This point was also raised in conversations with staff.

4.11 The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel visited Riverside Court twice and spoke to frontline staff and, in a separate meeting, to first tier managers about the introduction of the practice standards and how it felt for them. The views of staff were largely positive and staff were “cautiously optimistic” for the future. Some staff indicated that it was positive to have clarity about standards and expectations. There were some reservations about the potential for new reporting requirements to impact on face to face time between social workers and their clients. The Panel notes this point and welcomes the introduction of a new IT system as an important step forward. It is hoped that once implemented, the new IT system and the resolution of other workforce issues should go some way to addressing these concerns.

The Panel **RECOMMENDS:**

1. That once the full practice standards document has been embedded, an “at a glance” summary version should be produced to act as more user friendly prompt for staff. The Scrutiny Panel would like to be given the opportunity to comment on the final draft of the summary practice standards document.
2. That the “at a glance” summary standards document be made accessible to all councillors to enable councillors to understand practice.

3. That a review mechanism is put in place to ensure that in future new legislative requirements affecting social work practice, including casework management, are embedded into practice standards in a timely way.

4. That a consistent approach is adopted to ensure that casework accurately reflects the voice of the child, rather than being an interpretation or summary.

5. Leadership, Management and Supervision

5.1 The Panel was informed that the Development Board recognises the need for more visible leadership within the service by senior officers in order to lead service change and ongoing improvement. Evidence presented indicated that the new senior managers at Director and Assistant Director level are now more visible in leading change in a supportive way. The Cabinet portfolio holder has also been proactive in ensuring there is more visible political leadership in this area.

5.2 The ongoing development and implementation of the updated approach to social work is underpinned by management and supervision arrangements. The Munro report reflects on the importance of effective supervision:

Good social work practice requires forming a relationship with the child and family and using professional reasoning to judge how best to work with parents. The nature of this close engagement means that supervision, which provides the space for critical reflection, is essential for reducing the risk of errors in professionals' reasoning.

The Development Board is overseeing a refreshed approach to supporting staff through the transition period and being clear about what staff can expect from management going forward. These include:

- A more visible senior leadership team. Including the Director, Assistant Director and Cabinet Portfolio holder meeting with staff and leading some of the development sessions.
- The clarification of the role of Principal Social Worker
- The introduction of Advanced Practitioners
- The use of performance clinics to focus on areas of practice
- The role of Independent Review Officers
- A consistent approach to supervision, i.e to ensure it is reflective

5.3 The following roles are integral to the development work:

Principal Social Worker:

One of the recommendations of the Munro report led to a requirement for local authorities to have a Principal Child and Family Social Worker (PSW). To quote Munro:

“... The role of Principal Child and Family Social Worker would take responsibility for relating the views of social workers to those whose decisions affect their work. ...”

The PSW provides feedback from front line social workers to managers and partners, including the Director of Children’s Services and the Chief Executive.

The designated PSW should be a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice in the local authority and who is still actively involved in frontline practice. In Kirklees the role was originally integrated into another senior role within the social work team. However given the breadth of development work, it was felt appropriate to establish a stand alone post of Principal Social Worker with the addition of a quality assurance role. The post has now been recruited to and reports directly to the Assistant Director for Families and Child Protection.

The PSW acts as a guardian of social work standards and has the responsibility to raise practice issues with the Chief Executive and the Director for Children and Young People. The PSW also attends some meetings of the Development Board. The PSW has responsibility for a team of auditors who continue to carry out a review of children’s case files.

When meeting with the PSW the Panel was advised that the PSW’s role involved ensuring that the workforce is skilled to do their job, which means supporting them to deliver good quality work. It was explained that although the PSW does not have her own caseload, she works closely with social workers in supporting their development. The PSW plays a key role in preventing a recurrence of inadequate practice issues.

Advanced Practitioners:

5.4 The role of Advanced Practitioner was introduced to Children’s Services to allow experienced social work practitioners who work alongside the Principal Social Worker, to support continuous practice improvement. As the service moves forward the support offered is expected to adapt to the changing needs of the workforce and service.

Advanced Practitioners work alongside social workers in a coaching and mentoring role to ensure they understand and deliver good practice. They support the practitioners to improve the quality and consistency of practice and embed learning into practice. This can be done through both individual and group learning. They are also working with Huddersfield University in the development of pre and post qualification training.

The Principal Social Worker advised the Panel that the Advanced Practitioners will be supporting the newly qualified social workers and although they did not have their own caseloads, they would co-work cases with other social workers to develop good practice. This would involve supporting, trouble shooting and one to one coaching of social workers to improve their skills. They will be undertaking training to deliver the ‘risk sensible model’ and it is anticipated that they will take the overall lead in training the workforce. The

Advanced Practitioners are seconded to the role for 12 months, at which point the role will be reviewed.

Performance Clinics

5.5 Performance clinics have been used to support the implementation of consistent standards. The clinics are held every month and led by the Assistant Director. Each clinic focuses on a specific area of practice, identified through the case audits and performance information. Managers must attend and dependent on the topic being considered, the relevant social work team will also be required to attend. Discussions aim to ensure staff have a full understanding of statutory requirements and good practice ways of working.

Areas of focus have included;

- Children who are missing
- Children at risk of CSE.
- Looked after Children Reviews
- Statutory Visits to Looked after Children and Young People
- Looked after Children who have experienced three or more placement moves
- Numbers of Looked after Children
- Numbers of Care Leavers – those accessing education, training and employment/those living in suitable accommodation
- Children subject to Child Protection Plans for more than 15 months
- Children subject to Child Protection Plans for a second time
- Single Assessments completed
- Referrals into Mash/Repeat Referrals/Response to Referrals within 24 hours
- Adoption Score Card Performance
- Social Work Caseloads

Independent Review Officers (IROs)

5.6 The Independent Review Officers main focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child and make sure that the child's wishes are given full consideration. The role operates most successfully in a supportive culture where the role is valued by managers and staff. An effective IRO should be part of achieving improved outcomes for children.

Staff that spoke to the Panel appreciate the importance of the IRO role and said they welcome the independent challenge provided and the time to reflect on their approach to cases. Staff feel it is important to get guidance but there is a need to get the balance right so that the advice given adds value to the casework management process.

First tier managers

5.7 Integral to the successful implementation of practice standards is the use of reflective supervision led by first tier managers. The Development Board recognises that whilst the Supervision Policy makes it clear in respect of staff members, greater clarity is needed concerning how first tier managers /supervisors are supported. The Board agreed that something should be added to make it clear that supervisors are able to seek support and assurance elsewhere.

These concerns have also been mentioned at the Panel's site visit discussion with staff. Staff welcome the development work and the opportunity for reflective supervision but questioned what support is available to supervisors to help them in meeting expectations.

Findings:

5.8 The Panel is greatly concerned that the previous leadership of Children's Services had not identified and addressed the casework management issues at an earlier time. The previous political leadership (prior to the current portfolio holder) was not providing challenge or proactive, strategic leadership. Overview and Scrutiny had also not highlighted any concerns about casework management. The period coincided with the publication of the requirements arising from the Munro Review which have significant implications for the approach to social work practice. The evidence indicates that the service had been slow to embed changes to practice. The Panel feels that the previous senior leadership has not been driving the necessary strategic change in a timely way.

The Panel acknowledges that the Development Board recognises that there needs to be more visible, robust and challenging leadership within the service by senior officers and the Council needs to learn lessons from the past. The Ad Hoc Panel has seen that the Chief Executive, Cabinet portfolio holder, Director and Assistant Director are all providing more visible and proactive leadership since the development issues were identified. The Panel welcomes the approach of the new management team and the fresh perspective on practice in Kirklees.

It is felt that Children's Services has not been sufficiently embedded corporately within the Council but the new management team has recognised this and is working towards addressing the situation. Whilst the Panel welcomes the efforts of the new management team in this area, it considers it a major service weakness and wishes to monitor progress in this area.

5.9 The development work provides a range of support to staff to ensure that a good understanding of the practice standards is developed and appropriate supervision is in place which allows for reflection and ongoing learning.

The Panel welcomes the dedicated PSW post, recognising the importance of having a designated officer to oversee on going practice issues and ensure standards are maintained.

The PSW has a role to represent concerns of social workers to senior management . The Panel suggests this might be further extended to allow the PSW to also report concerns to the Cabinet Portfolio holder. The Panel understands the reasons why the PSW does not currently have a caseload however, in line with the Munro Report, the Panel feels that the PSW should have a reduced allocation of cases to manage. This is to ensure they maintain current practice skills and experience and are best placed to support other social workers.

The combination of the development approaches put in place by the new management team, is welcomed and feedback from staff shows that the different elements of support are valued. The Panel received specific comments on the peer mentoring role of the advanced practitioners and the use of reflective supervision. Staff appreciate that the new systems give time to reflect and space to think, whereas previously they felt that their time had been spent firefighting.

It is encouraging for panel members to hear the positivity of staff who feel that the service is going in the right direction. The Panel commends the hard work and commitment shown by staff at all levels to moving forward and addressing inconsistencies.

The Panel is mindful of the concerns highlighted about support for first tier managers who have both practitioner and supervisor roles. There is a balance to be struck in the future between investing resources in dedicated support to raise standards whilst still ensuring that there are sufficient resources to manage caseloads and maintain levels of expertise. Whilst future support arrangements have been recognised as an area requiring further consideration the Panel wishes to be further assured of the support that is being put in place for first tier managers.

5.10 Recommendations:

5. That the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be provided with information on the support available to first tier managers.
6. The Scrutiny Panel recognises that sustaining the current high level of support to practitioners is very resource intensive. However the Panel recommends that when support arrangements are reviewed, including the future of the advanced practitioner role, sufficient support remains in place to ensure that standards are maintained.
7. That Overview and Scrutiny monitor the progress of embedding a corporate approach within Children's Services at regular intervals.
8. In recognising the importance of ensuring that the voice of social workers is heard the Panel recommends that there should be a mechanism in place to ensure an on going two way dialogue.

6. Referral thresholds and mechanisms

6.1 A further component of workflow and case management is the referral mechanism whereby new cases come into the social care system. The Kirklees Children's Continuum of Need and Response (CoNR) Framework is the local procedure to assist all those whose work brings them into contact with children, young people and their families to identify the level of help and protection required .

6.2 It was noted that the Safeguarding Children Board (SCB) had previously raised concerns about the timeliness of responding to referrals. This issue formed one aspect of the Development Board's work, with the Independent Chair of the SCB also attending board meetings.

As part of looking at how referrals are dealt with, members of the Scrutiny Panel visited the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to talk to staff and look at the referral process.

6.3 In June 2016, the Development Board's consideration of referral information indicated a conversion rate of contact to referral of between 30% and 50%. It was anticipated that the introduction of a new Referral Contact Form would provide greater clarity in recording contacts and identifying formal referral as the appropriate action for the contact. The timeliness of referral decisions showed a consistent improvement with approximately 77% within timescale.

At the time of its June visit to the MASH, the Panel had concerns about how initial contacts were being managed, with the majority appearing to generate referrals for social worker assessment. Feedback from social work staff identified concerns about the appropriateness of some referrals. The Scrutiny Panel feels that the system was operating contrary to the principles of early intervention and prevention in not always signposting to the most appropriate level of intervention or support.

6.4 A priority review of the referral thresholds document was undertaken to help staff effectively sift initial referrals into the MASH. In July 2016 the SCB looked at the quality of information being referred and the development of a more explicit referral form. The new referral thresholds came into operation from the 1 August 2016 and aim to ensure that initial contacts generate an appropriate and proportionate response.

Findings:

6.5 On the visit to the MASH the Panel saw for itself the commitment of the staff involved in the MASH and the tangible benefits of the working in partnership approach (see also section 9 partnership working).

6.6 From the visit to the MASH and other anecdotal evidence it is apparent that historically a disproportionate number of initial contacts were being progressed as social

work referrals rather than being signposted to other more appropriate areas of support or early intervention. It was suggested that some referrals lacked sufficient detail to progress them, however this should be addressed by the use of the new referral process.

Current IT processes take a disproportionate amount of staff resources to input and extract information (see also section 10). There is further work needed across partners to understand the information sharing that is needed to work effectively and be able to identify issues relevant to initial contacts and subsequent referrals.

Early in the work of the Development Board the issue of progressing social work referrals in a timely way was identified. Given the volume of referrals, there is a need to ensure that social work resources are not being inappropriately used in filtering and redirecting contacts.

6.7 The Panel welcomed the introduction of new referral thresholds to help structure how initial contacts are filtered in a way that better links to the early intervention and prevention approach of New Council.

6.8 Recommendations:

9. Managers need to ensure that the revised referral approach reflects the principles of early intervention and prevention in seeking to direct contacts to the appropriate level of support.

The Panel **recommends** that Managers should continue to monitor the referral process to ensure that the new thresholds are being consistently applied. If successful, performance information should be able to evidence a reduction in the volume of initial contacts that generate a referral for formal assessment.

7. Reviewing performance management information and processes

7.1 Prior to the establishment of the Development Board, the outcome of the case audits indicated that current performance reporting arrangements were insufficient to identify significant underperformance. Previous quarterly performance information seen by councillors was limited and failed to identify underlying case management issues.

7.2 The Munro report highlights:

.... It is important that data allows the child's journey through the system to be mapped and that such data informs discussions about local practice, rather than being used as absolute indicators of 'good' or 'bad' performance. ...

..... Local authorities and their partners should use a combination of nationally collected and locally published performance information to help benchmark performance, facilitate improvement and promote accountability. It is crucial that performance information is not treated as an unambiguous measure of good or bad performance as performance indicators tend to be.

Munro recognises there is a balance to be struck in reducing “red tape” whilst still monitoring data that gives a picture of local practice. Evidence shows that the Development Board has recognised the need to comprehensively review the performance information that is needed moving forward.

7.3 The Development Board very quickly put in place a new data set around case management and introduced weekly compliance data on statutory processes and a narrative summarising progress in each area. The collection of the data was very resource intensive due in part to having to interrogate three different IT systems. The Panel is pleased to note that plans are in place to improve the IT position (see also section 10 of the report).

The Panel heard that the Board has also developed a high level dashboard that includes more operational information such as unallocated cases, life chances of Looked After Children, etc. It has been recognised that the data did not inform on the quality of information and case file review observations are needed to address quality issues. In March 2016 the service began the process of getting people trained up to review case files.

One of the early performance clinics focussed on performance information. The intention is that performance clinics will be held every month (see also section 5) and that performance data will inform the areas of focus for the clinics.

Findings:

7.4 The Panel feels that that the previous performance information was insufficient to identify significant concerns at an operational level. Neither senior officers nor councillors were aware of the level of inconsistency and under performance in case work management. However, once the issue had been identified senior officers and the new Cabinet Portfolio holder (and subsequently the Development Board) responded to address the issue and ensure that going forward an accurate picture of performance is available.

7.5 The availability of accessible performance data has been further hampered by the IT systems currently in use in the social work service. It continues to be resource intensive to extract the current range of data and the Panel wants to acknowledge the efforts of officers to ensure that this level of timely monitoring information is maintained.

Discussions with staff also highlighted the difficulties of the current IT system and the cumbersome way in which staff have to move between screens to input and retrieve information (see also section 10 on IT). The Panel welcomes the prioritisation of a procurement exercise to put in place a new IT system that will support the new ways of working. Subject to successful implementation, including data transfer and training, the IT system should make it easier to extract performance data to provide on going monitoring information.

7.6 The Panel agrees that an overhaul of performance information is required to ensure it is fit for purpose as the Council moves into a new way of working. The learning from the work in Children's Services should inform that cross Council work.

The role of councillors in performance management needs to be redefined and training made available so that they have the appropriate skills to undertake their responsibilities. Councillors have a range of roles, from Cabinet portfolio holder, to scrutineer and ward member and it is recommended that there is clarity around performance management responsibilities and the level of information appropriate to each role.

There are a range of internal and partnership bodies that Children's Services report to, including the Corporate Parenting Board, the CSE and Safeguarding Member Panel and the Children's Trust, but there does not appear to be a coordinated approach and clarity of roles across governance arrangements, including performance management responsibilities.

In light of the learning from Children's Services, the corporate approach to performance information needs to ensure that the Council is monitoring the right issues. There should be clarity about responsibilities for considering and challenging performance information at every level. Within Children's Services, consideration should also be given to governance arrangements to ensure the future role and function of bodies is clear and duplication avoided (see recommendation 27).

7.7 IT should be used to automate as much performance reporting as possible. The Panel consider that it is equally important that performance information is able to demonstrate good performance and achievements, not just non-compliance and under performance.

7.8 Recommendations:

10. That the future role of Councillors in performance management should be closely defined and that appropriate skills training be provided to enable them to undertake that role.

11. That Overview and Scrutiny continues to monitor the implementation and outcomes of the development work, for example the outcomes of the introduction the new IT system and the workforce strategy work, to ensure that the desired improvements are achieved and sustained.

12. That the Cabinet give further consideration to the corporate approach to performance management using the learning from Children's Services to inform the work.

8. Workforce Strategy:

8.1 A further priority focus for development work is workforce strategy. Like many councils, Kirklees faces challenges in the recruitment and retention of some levels of social workers. The Director for Children and Young People explained to the Panel that feedback from young people illustrated the importance they placed on the stability and continuity of social worker support. The example was given of young people requesting that social workers also complete an 'all about me' document, given that the children felt that they didn't know much about the social workers that they had a close relationship with.

8.2 The Panel was informed that Kirklees has a good record in recruiting newly qualified social workers (NQSW), with 12 having recently been appointed. The Principal Social Worker informed the Panel on work being undertaken as part of a teaching partnership with the Universities of York and Huddersfield. The work is continuing to grow year on year and involves working with undergraduates, giving tutorials, offering support and practice placements. This work has successfully attracted students to apply for positions within Kirklees. The work has enabled Kirklees to have an input into the Universities curriculum content, which means that a higher calibre of candidates are applying for jobs in Kirklees.

As part of the development work, a revised induction programme has been put in place for newly recruited NQSWs. The NQSWs are kept together and given work from across all service areas to gain a full understanding of the whole journey of a child, rather than having to choose a specialism too early in their induction. Managers and advanced practitioners are able to identify a "best fit" for the newly qualified social workers, and have discussions with them around which area to specialise in.

8.3 The Development Board's aim is for Kirklees to have a stable workforce. It is recognised that this will take time and officers estimated that it will take approximately two years if the workforce strategy is successful.

The national trend points to a social worker staying in front line social work for about 8 years. It is anticipated that there will be some staff turnover in Kirklees due to the change in working procedures. The common reasons for leaving are not salary increases, of up to £3K between authorities, but working conditions, manageable workloads and access to supervision.

8.4 The current challenge in Kirklees is recruiting Team Managers in such a competitive market. It was suggested that the turnover in staff is due to a number of factors, including experienced staff moving to other roles within Kirklees, staff moving to other authorities for a more competitive salary, some retiring, or leaving due to family commitments.

8.5 Whilst aiming to recruit permanent staff and move to a stable workforce, in the interim there is a the need to continue to use agency workers. The Panel was informed that historically there have been low levels of agency staff working in social work in Kirklees. The Panel heard differing perspectives on the use of agency staff with many views focusing on the lack of continuity for clients. Alternatively it was suggested that agency staff can bring a range of experience and different views to the service, which can be very positive.

Staff Development

8.6 The Panel heard from the Learning and Organisational Development Manager that although Kirklees has provided a significant amount of training in the past, this has evolved into a scattered and disjointed approach. The Workforce Strategy seeks to support the journey of staff throughout their careers. This will begin with the strengthened induction programme, with a clear career progression path, ensuring statutory requirements are met and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is maintained.

8.7 The government is also introducing an accreditation scheme 'Putting Children 1st' but at the time of the discussion it was not clear what the overall scheme would look like going forward. All social workers will be required to commence the accreditation process by 2020 and it is important that Kirklees Workforce Strategy is aligned to the accreditation and external processes. Details of the initiative published in July 2016 indicate that it has 3 key principles:-

- People and Leadership
- Practice and Systems
- Governance and Accountability

The Panel notes that one of the benefits of the accreditation scheme is likely to be the retention of staff, given that social workers are unlikely to want to move authorities whilst the accreditation process is ongoing.

8.8 Kirklees has recognised that one of the ways to address the Team Manager recruitment issue is to develop current staff in a “grow your own” approach. Kirklees has joined the Aspiring Managers Training Programme which is part of the national Step Up Programme to progress staff.

Findings:

8.9 The Panel understands that both nationally and regionally there are challenges in the recruitment and retention of social workers. The panel supports the integrated approach to trying to address the issues within Kirklees, through a pathway of development and 121 support to help retain the staff we have and give them the ability to progress within the service.

The Panel would also support work at a sub regional / regional level, to try to work together rather than staff moving between authorities for a marginally better offer whilst no authority benefits from continuity.

8.10 The Panel notes that the current situation has led to an increase in the number of agency staff. The Panel welcomes efforts to address this situation as soon as possible, particularly from a client continuity perspective but also because of the financial implications for the Council.

8.11 The Munro report’s view of CPD is:

“ CPD takes many forms and this review supports more co-working on cases, on-the-job practice coaching, as well as more formal local teaching programmes in particular areas of knowledge, skill set and intervention methods....”

The Panel can see that Kirklees is putting in place a combination of formal training, on-the-job coaching and co-working on cases, whilst also seeking to influence pre and post qualification courses of study. It is seeking to provide NQSWs with the opportunity to train in all areas of social work prior to being matched to a specialist area. This approach is to be welcomed and the Panel hopes that in due course the service will be able to evidence that the strategy has been successful and staff have been retained by Kirklees and have progressed to more senior positions. The challenge will be in maintaining an appropriate level of support going forward.

Recommendations:

13. That in the interests of reducing dependency on agency staff and achieving a stable workforce, analysis should be undertaken to identify longer term sustainable, developmental support arrangements to help to retain and develop social workers in Kirklees.

9. Working effectively with Partners

9.1 The Panel also spoke to partners who share responsibilities in areas of child protection and work closely with social work practitioners and managers. As part of this strand of work the Panel also visited the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to see how effectively staff from partner agencies are working together to support some of the development areas.

The MASH is a central resource which will receive all safeguarding and child protection enquiries and referrals. It is seen as a milestone in protecting vulnerable children in Kirklees. The MASH is an example of integrated working where professionals from Children's Social Care, Police, Health and Education work together to safeguard children and young people and provide a joined up service for families.

Staff within the MASH recognise the improved informal intelligence sharing and joined up approach that working together has brought. On the Panel's visit it was suggested that the work of the MASH could be further improved with the co-location of representatives of other significant partners, for example health.

West Yorkshire Police

9.2 The Panel met with Chief Superintendent Steve Cotter of West Yorkshire Police who is a partner member of the Children's Services Development Board. CS Cotter felt that the Development Board is key in establishing the important work and role of the MASH. The MASH enables partner co-location, shared training, informed changes to working practice and contributes to improved working relationships. Another important feature has been the willingness of partners involved in the MASH to challenge each other. Challenge meetings are held in Social Care to discuss outstanding caseloads and WY Police are now attending these meetings.

One of the major benefits of the MASH is that discussions are taking place "there and then" between the staff who are already in the room together. CS Cotter feels there is a very positive direction of travel for partnership working in Kirklees. At the time of the Panel discussion CS Cotter felt it would be useful to see third sector providers becoming part of the MASH. CS Cotter would also welcome the extension of the opening hours of the MASH and supported the MASH offering a 24 hour, seven days a week service.

Independent Chair of Kirklees Safeguarding Children's Board

9.3 Bron Sanders, Independent Chair of the Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board (SCB), met with the Panel to give her views on the work being undertaken by the Development Board of which she is a partner member. The Panel also explored how the work of the SCB linked to the priorities of the Development Board.

Ms Sanders explained the structure of the SCB and indicated that the main Board met approximately 5 times per year and is underpinned by a series of working groups that look in more detail at priority areas of work. One of the groups is evaluation and effectiveness which also carries out audit work and considers frontline practice. Ms Sanders welcomes the procurement of a new IT system and hopes that it will provide the more detailed performance information that the SCB requires. The SCB has been developing its own data set to cover the child's journey and currently has 2 years worth of data. It has proved difficult to get timely data.

9.4 Ms Sanders informed the Scrutiny Panel that as part of the SCB's audit work a concern had been identified about the time it was taking for children to be seen by a social worker. Ms Sanders had raised concerns with the Director and Chief Executive and welcomed the positive response which has informed the development work.

Ms Sander's view is that the Development Board is providing reassurance for the Safeguarding Children Board and that critical questions are being asked and the necessary changes put in place. Ms Sanders emphasised that a lot of good work has been undertaken, but it is critical to ensure that partners understand any changes so that they can address any impacts that directly affect them.

Ms Sanders commented on the limited opportunities for the SCB to engage with councillors. It was suggested that more opportunities to discuss the key issues being identified by the Board would be welcomed.

Schools as Community Hubs

9.5 The Panel noted that in September 2015 the Chief Executive met with school leaders to share the philosophy of Early Intervention and Prevention and promote the opportunities for working in partnership with schools.

The Council wants to engage with schools to help strategically shape future work. An example was given of recent work regarding a future contract for school nurses and health visitors. Schools are able to influence the shape of commissioning in such a way as to connect up resources so that they could be allocated and work in the most appropriate way.

The role of the Local Authority moving forward is to be supporting, enabling and where appropriate challenging, to facilitate the work of schools rather than to work in a directive

manner. Historically the Council had a directive approach but the skills within schools mean that such an approach is not appropriate moving forward.

9.6 Since the initial discussion, officers have been understanding in greater detail the scale and scope of what schools already do 'beyond the school gates', i.e. beyond the formal roles of teaching and learning. There are 60,000 children and families that currently go through the gates into Kirklees schools. Schools have a significant relationship with children and their families and are best placed to support those children and families at an early stage.

9.7 The Scrutiny Panel spoke with Alan Cumming, Assistant Headteacher from Holmfirth High School about the school's experience of being involved in the Early Intervention and Prevention work. Mr Cumming explained that it is an important part of the school's remit to work with families and communities given that well supported families and communities lead to children who will perform well within school. Significant emphasis is placed on engaging outside of academic issues, such as through community events, sports etc in order to build constructive relationships. Some schools have become part of community forums alongside faith and voluntary groups, working with the common aim of improving the community, to help people become more engaged in living healthy and happy lives.

9.8 The Panel considered the potential tensions between secondary and primary schools and noted that working together provided the chance to join things up, ensuring a 'bottom up' approach. By including the different levels of education in the Community Hub with community and agency support, there are opportunities to build trust with families which can have a positive impact throughout the family. The intention of the hub approach is to provide early support to break down barriers and help prevent families getting to the point of requiring more formal interventions.

9.9 It was noted that community hubs are not part of the Council, they are owned and driven by the schools. This enables schools to provide wrap around support and better co-ordination of resources within the hub area. They are helping the Council to shape its early help offer. The Council will facilitate and be an interface for the early help offer, once it has been determined. Approximately 50% of schools have become engaged in the community hubs work but all are at different stages.

9.10 The Panel commends the community hubs work and is keen that more schools become involved. It is suggested that the communication networks that engage with all schools, could promote the positive outcomes from the early intervention and prevention work. It is likely that schools will become persuaded to be involved as the advantages of the approach become more evident.

The panel discussed the role of schools in referring concerns and their interaction with the MASH. Mr Cumming explained the on-going communication with the multi-agency safeguarding hub including use of the new referral forms as part of normal practice. There

are daily conversations around specific issues. Again the difficulties of the use of different databases were highlighted, at times these are a barrier to seamless information, the example of missing pupils was highlighted.

Findings:

9.11 It is evident to the Panel that the staff and partners spoken to demonstrated an enthusiasm and commitment to the benefits of the MASH way of working. It is the view of the Panel that the MASH has provided a foundation for improved intelligence sharing which can continue to support safeguarding and an early intervention approach. The Panel commends the work of the staff who are working together to make the vision for integrated working a reality.

The Panel supports the ongoing development of the MASH, including proposals to relocate the MASH to a more central, accessible location with space to expand to support more corporate ways of working. The Panel views the MASH as a key component of early intervention and prevention in its role as the first point of contact for enquires. It is the Panel's view that there is an opportunity to further develop the MASH approach with the inclusion of other agencies.

Data and intelligence sharing has been identified as a key area for maximising the effectiveness of working together and safeguarding children. It is important going forward that wherever possible, unnecessary barriers to information sharing are addressed without compromising data security.

The Panel heard evidence of the new safeguarding referral process being used in schools and consider it important that it is rolled out and used consistently across all schools in the borough.

The Panel is encouraged by the progress of work to develop schools as community hubs. The Panel recommends that there is routine promotion of the success stories attributable to the community hub way of working. The Panel would like to see the community hub development support offer rolled out to all schools irrespective of their status.

9.12 The Panel notes the comments of the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board that opportunities for greater engagement with Councillors would be welcomed. It was suggested that as a minimum, an annual private meeting with the Cabinet portfolio holder and the Scrutiny lead for Children's Services should be established. The Panel wants to see a mechanism whereby the SCB has the opportunity for informal dialogue to discuss concerns and the outcomes of pieces of work, at the appropriate level, including Chief Executive and Cabinet portfolio holder.

Recommendations:

14. That proposals for the development of the MASH should consider how best to integrate other partners and agencies, including the third sector, into the work of the MASH.

15. That as part of developing any proposals that have implications for joint working, communication with partners should be a priority to ensure that there is a shared understanding and commitment moving forward.

16. That consideration be given as to how the Safeguarding Children Board can engage both formally and informally with councillors to share information and discuss issues, as part of a formal governance review of Children's Services (see also recommendation 27).

17. That Children's Services positively promotes the "good news" stories arising from Community Hub work to highlight good practice and encourage others to see the advantages of the approach.

18. That the Council and its partners should review data and intelligence sharing arrangements as a priority, to ensure that the interests of safeguarding children are put first.

10. IT Infrastructure

10.1 At initial conversations with staff it was apparent that the IT systems used in social work did not support current practice. Practitioners are having to work across three incompatible systems to access the information they require. It is a fragmented and resource intensive approach which does not support new ways of working.

10.2 The Panel welcomes the early initiation of a procurement exercise to replace the IT system with a model that is fit for purpose moving forward. It is acknowledged that implementing a new process will be demanding on staff. Following initial training there will need to be clear expectations of how information will be updated and maintained.

10.3 The Assistant Director Financial Management is managing the IT procurement process and advised the panel that the Development Board has identified the core functionality and the specific issues that need to be addressed by a system. As part of the procurement process the Council has challenged suppliers to put forward solutions, rather than just listing functions. The system will include:

- Social work case management system
- Early help module
- Single view – to enable a professional to see an holistic view of a person across different multi-agency systems
- Integration – reducing the complexity of IT systems and enabling integration
- Mobile/off-line functionality – to enable practitioner use wherever they are working
- Finance module – integration with SAP
- Performance monitoring information

10.4 The Panel received information on the selected system which included a feature that enables a manager or practitioner to see the progress made across social work cases from referral to assessment and potentially the development of a child protection plan.

A further function, not previously available, will be the ability to create a network plan which puts the child at the centre and then illustrates the different relationships with family members and agencies. The new system also has a geogram facility which sets out family relationships and is a mandatory requirement for courts. The ability to have this function as part of the software will save time for practitioners.

10.5 The Ad Hoc Panel continues to look at the work tray alerts feature which provides a day by day list of tasks that are due, for example, setting up review meetings, undertaking single assessments for children and writing review meeting reports. The work tray alert will enable managers to understand workloads at any given time and will provide clear priorities for individual practitioners.

10.6 Performance monitoring information will be available through the system at both managerial and individual practitioner level. The financial abilities of the system included budget authorisation processes and budget statement summaries which will enable

practitioners to have an up to date understanding of ongoing costs against budget availability.

The “go live” implementation date for the new IT system will be between July and October 2017.

10.7 The Ad Hoc Panel recognises that the implementation of the new IT system and the confidence of the users of the software is critical to its success. Ms Hogg explained that a train the trainer programme is part of the procurement exercise. There will also be super users and floor walkers in place to support staff during early implementation.

Findings:

10.8 The Panel had the opportunity to see the current IT system in operation and spoke to staff about using the system. It is very obvious that the system is incompatible with the requirements of the role moving forward. It is resource intensive and frustrating to users. The Panel welcomes that an early procurement exercise to replace the IT system was actioned by the Development Board.

10.9 The Panel has received assurance that the new system should help to address many of the current concerns and hopes that it will come to fruition. It should support the ongoing provision of timely performance information to help managers ensure that standards are maintained and statutory compliance adhered to.

Staff have been through a period of intense change and development and there is a risk that the introduction of a new system, whilst welcomed, will be a further challenge and could impact on staff morale.

The Panel recognises the new IT system is one of a number of tools to support process but it should complement the development of social work practice so that staff are able to continually develop in their professional understanding and approach to working with children and their families.

10.10 The new system will drive the case management process and whilst providing clarity around tasks and deadlines, through the intray feature, it is likely that initially it will be very demanding on staff to adapt to the new way of working. The ongoing range of IT support, ie super users and floor walkers should help with the practical use of the system but managers will need to be mindful of other support to staff until they are confident in the use of the system and have adapted to the new way of working.

10.11 The Panel is disappointed that it is currently not possible to link the new IT system to partner systems, for example the IT systems used by GPs. The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel cannot reach a view on the ability of the IT system to deliver the required improvements until the system is in place and sufficient time has elapsed for it to have been embedded into practice.

Recommendations:

17. That there are realistic timescales around how long it will take to embed a new system and ensure staff are competent and confident in using the new software.
18. That there is initial close monitoring of the use of system to ensure that the use of the new IT system is successfully embedded into practice and becomes an integral part of process management.
19. That there is ongoing monitoring of the performance of the new IT system to ensure that it is meeting the Council's expectations and delivering the prescribed outcomes.
20. That once the IT system is embedded, there should be a review of the performance information available and how that is used to effectively improve the quality of social work in Kirklees, with the aim of maintaining consistent good practice social work and continually looking forward.
21. That the new IT system is also used to identify good performance, to feed into appraisals etc. and to be able to demonstrate the difference made.

11. Edge of Care

11.1 When members of the Scrutiny Panel met with staff, including first tier managers, the term Edge of Care was used to describe the early intervention activities that help children and their families at the earliest opportunity and wherever possible prevent the need for more formal social care interventions. Edge of Care services are aimed at preventing family breakdown through targeted support at an early stage; in some cases, services will assist children in care to return home safely where they can be supported by appropriate community based provision.

It was suggested to the Panel that the Edge of Care offer in Kirklees was not as well defined as some other local authorities. The Panel commissioned a report to better understand Edge of Care in Kirklees and consider bench marking information on good practice within other local authorities.

11.2 The report indicated that as at August 2016 there were 683 Looked After Children in Kirklees. The vision for edge of care in Kirklees is to develop an effective edge of care service which targets support at an early stage for families with multiple needs, preventing children and young people becoming looked after and keeping families together. By reshaping Kirklees models of delivery and working effectively with other services, Kirklees will be able to support families to stay together. Services will include temporary respite for families and therapeutic services to support family functioning and improve resilience.

The service will include temporary accommodation staffed by experienced practitioners who will provide behavioural and parenting support and respite to parents. A rapid response

service will use evidence based techniques to ensure that all family members access appropriate support and multi-systemic therapy will be provided to children and young people who would also be linked to targeted youth workers and community-based provision to maintain outcomes.

11.3 Kirklees Stronger Families Programme has also been operating since 2012 and has provided early help to prevent problems from escalating to statutory levels. The Programme has commissioned a range of provision including the Family Intervention Project (FIP) which provides intensive family support through a key worker.

11.4 The existing Legal Gateway Panel meets weekly to consider all cases where Social Workers are recommending children come into care; this is complemented by the Section 20 Clinic which is held monthly. At both meetings, checks are made to ensure that all early intervention and prevention services have been accessed and Kirklees has helped families to improve parenting, keep families together or reunite families wherever possible.

11.5 The Council is establishing an Edge of Care Panel to consider the cases of all children where there is a high risk that they will come into the care system; this includes those who have recently come into care on an unplanned/emergency basis. The panel will put in place the most appropriate and timely early intervention to maintain the children/young people in their families and out of the care system. The panel (comprising Head of the Stronger Families Programme, Early Intervention Services, Child Adolescent Mental Health Services, Looked After Children Nurse) will allocate intensive and focussed Edge of Care resources including support from the Family Intervention Project and specialist health and education support.

The Edge of Care Panel is also exploring alternative edge of care services including temporary accommodation to provide time and space for families and young people for brief periods with the aim of helping them to resolve issues quickly and return the young person home.

11.6 The report identified the following examples of good practice in Edge of Care services and options for future commissioning which included:

- Leeds: Family Group Conferencing
- North Yorkshire: Edge of Care services – rated by OFSTED as good or outstanding in every area
- Triborough Council, London: A new model in 2014 which increased referrals to early help services year on year
- Essex: Multi-Systemic Therapy
- Family Functioning Therapy – help for troubled young people and families to overcome delinquency, substance abuse and violence
- Intergenerational Mediation – to reduce the incidence of teenagers leaving home prematurely.

Findings:

11.7 Throughout the work of the Panel the importance of effective early intervention and prevention (EIP) approaches has been highlighted as a means of saving resources by avoiding the more costly social care interventions. It has been shown that not only is it a better use of resources but more importantly it often leads to better outcomes for children and their families. The Panel supports the move towards EIP but recognises that there are initial resource implications in establishing the range of low level interventions and realigning current approaches.

The panel believes that the Edge of Care offer is an important part of delivering an early intervention and prevention approach in Kirklees. The report commissioned by the Panel indicates that whilst there are examples of edge of care provision, the need to better coordinate and develop the offer has been recognised.

In considering the approach across Kirklees, the Panel encourages the engagement of all schools within the Edge of Care process.

Recommendations:

22. The Panel recommends that the Edge of Care model in Kirklees be clarified and enhanced, including consideration of whether good practice from other areas might be effectively adapted for use in Kirklees.

23. That as part of clarifying the Edge of Care approach, the role of Schools is considered and schools have the opportunity to be part of the approach.

12. Overall Conclusions on the priorities and work of the Development Board

12.1 In conclusion, the Panel welcomed the strong leadership shown by the Development Board to initiate the improvement work and inject pace and urgency to address the compliance and under performance issues that had been identified.

Under the new leadership team and the Development Board, the work has gathered momentum and there is evidence that staff are engaged on the improvement journey and starting to make the necessary changes to practice. A lot of change has happened in a very short period of time and there now seems to be a clearer ambition for children's services in Kirklees.

The Panel agrees with the areas prioritised by the Board and acknowledges that the volume of change will be on going for some time before it becomes embedded and is normal practice.

Challenges

12.2 The Panel recognises that there are significant challenges ahead to continue the transformation of the service. The Panel feels there is a significant challenge in sustaining progress at a pace that ensures staff remain "on board" and are able to continue learning and adapting their practice. The most important challenge is to ensure that changes are made to process and practice to improve the life chances of children in Kirklees.

12.3 It is important that not only is the voice of the child heard but that once the period of intense change is over, social workers also feel they continue to have the ability to raise concerns and influence change.

12.4 Effective performance management, underpinned by timely and targeted information is critical in ensuring that high standards and legal compliance are maintained. However the Council needs to be able to measure not only the quantitative compliance with process requirements but also the qualitative improvement of the service provided to children and their families. The new senior management team needs to ensure that a consistent and effective approach is in place to allow the early identification of concerns.

12.5 The Panel does not underestimate the size of the challenge within Children's Services. It is keen that the learning is captured from this work so that the wider organisation can benefit and it can inform ongoing organisational change.

12.6 The development work and the recent national spotlight on areas of Children's Services has highlighted the need to have clarity on the role of councillors and governance arrangements in respect of Children's Services.

Currently there are limited opportunities for councillors to learn about the operational challenges and understand the complexities in order to participate in a constructive and informed challenge. The nature of the relationship between officers and councillors is critical to moving forward, as highlighted by the Rotherham case where the need for trust and openness was identified.

All councillors need to have an understanding of their role in children's services issues and a basic awareness. It is suggested that this might be underpinned by the introduction of an information sharing protocol.

12.7 The Panel feels there is the risk of duplication within current governance structures relating to children's services areas. There is a need to develop structures that are fit for purpose within the new council model with clarity on where statutory responsibilities lie and the role of members within those bodies.

12.8 It is too soon for the Panel to be able to measure the impact of the changes that are being introduced and to be assured that the improvement can be maintained. The Panel has identified that there are areas that Scrutiny would wish to monitor and follow up on.

However the Panel suggests that early in 2018, when recommendations of OFSTED have been put in place and the new IT system is embedded, that consideration be given to having a peer review of child protection services in Kirklees Council .

Recommendations:

24. That early in 2018, in order to have an independent view of what has been achieved, consideration be given to having a Peer Review of Child Protection Services in Kirklees Council.

25. There is a need for better coordination of Children's Services governance arrangements. The Panel recommends that there is a review of governance arrangements within Children's Services to look at the effectiveness of current structures and options for developing a more coordinated and consolidated governance approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Set out below is a complete list of the recommendations made by the Panel. The response to the recommendations is summarised in the attached action plan.

1. That once the full practice standards document has been embedded, an “at a glance” summary version should be produced to act as more user friendly prompt for staff. The Scrutiny Panel would like to be given the opportunity to comment on the final draft of the summary practice standards document.
2. That the “at a glance” summary standards document be made accessible to all councillors to enable councillors to understand practice.
3. That a review mechanism is put in place to ensure that in future new legislative requirements affecting social work practice, including casework management, are embedded into practice standards in a timely way.
4. That a consistent approach is adopted to ensure that casework accurately reflects the voice of the child, rather than being an interpretation or summary.
5. That the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be provided with information on the support available to first tier managers.
6. The Scrutiny Panel recognises that sustaining the current high level of support to practitioners is very resource intensive. However the Panel recommends that when support arrangements are reviewed, including the future of the advanced practitioner role, sufficient support remains in place to ensure that standards are maintained.
7. That Overview and Scrutiny monitor the progress of embedding a corporate approach within Children’s Services at regular intervals.
8. In recognising the importance of ensuring that the voice of social workers is heard the Panel recommends that there should be a mechanism in place to ensure an on going two way dialogue.
9. Managers need to ensure that the revised referral approach reflects the principles of early intervention and prevention in seeking to direct contacts to the appropriate level of support. The Panel recommends that Managers should continue to monitor the referral process to ensure that the new thresholds are being consistently applied. If successful, performance information should be able to evidence a reduction in the volume of initial contacts that generate a referral for formal assessment.
10. That the future role of Councillors in performance management should be closely defined and that appropriate skills training be provided to enable them to undertake that role.

Recommendations continued ...

11. That Overview and Scrutiny continues to monitor the implementation and outcomes of the development work, for example the outcomes of the introduction the new IT system and the workforce strategy work, to ensure that the desired improvements are achieved and sustained.

12. That the Cabinet give further consideration to the corporate approach to performance management using the learning from Children's Services to inform the work.

13. That in the interests of reducing dependency on agency staff and achieving a stable workforce, analysis should be undertaken to identify longer term sustainable, developmental support arrangements to help to retain and develop social workers in Kirklees.

14. That proposals for the development of the MASH should consider how best to integrate other partners and agencies, including the third sector, into the work of the MASH.

15. That as part of any developing any proposals that have implications for joint working, communication with partners should be a priority to ensure that there is a shared understanding and commitment moving forward.

16. That consideration be given as to how the Safeguarding Children Board can engage both formally and informally with councillors to share information and discuss issues, as part of a formal governance review of Children's Services (see also recommendation 27).

17. That Children's Services positively promotes the "good news" stories arising from Community Hub work to highlight good practice and encourage others to see the advantages of the approach.

18. That the Council and its partners should review data and intelligence sharing arrangements as a priority, to ensure that the interests of safeguarding children are put first.

19. That there are realistic timescales around how long it will take to embed a new system and ensure staff are competent and confident in using the new software.

20. That there is initial close monitoring of the use of system to ensure that the use of the new IT system is successfully embedded into practice and becomes an integral part of process management.

21. That there is ongoing monitoring of the performance of the new IT system to ensure that it is meeting the Council's expectations and delivering the prescribed outcomes.

Recommendations continued ..

22. That once the IT system is embedded, there should be a review of the performance information available and how that is used to effectively improve the quality of social work in Kirklees, with the aim of maintaining consistent good practice social work and continually looking forward.

23. That the new IT system is also used to identify good performance, to feed into appraisals etc. and to be able to demonstrate the difference made.

24. The Panel recommends that the Edge of Care model in Kirklees be clarified and enhanced, including consideration of whether good practice from other areas might be effectively adapted for use in Kirklees.

25. That as part of clarifying the Edge of Care approach, the role of Schools is considered and schools have the opportunity to be part of the approach.

26. That early in 2018, in order to have an independent view of what has been achieved, consideration be given to having a Peer Review of Child Protection Services in Kirklees Council.

27. There is a need for better coordination of Children's Services governance arrangements. The Panel recommends that there is a review of governance arrangements within Children's Services to look at the effectiveness of current structures and options for developing a more coordinated and consolidated governance approach.

Summary of background information

- The Munro Review of Child Protection – Part One – A Systems Analysis - Professor E Munro (October 2010)
- The Munro Review of Child Protection – Interim Report : The Child’s Journey – Professor E Munro (February 2011)
- The Munro Review of Child Protection – Final Report : A Child-centred System Professor E Munro (May 2011)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children – Department for Education (Statutory Guidance: March 2015)
- Process chart – mapping the pathways from MASH response and referral to early intervention and targeted support.
- The Kirklees Children’s Continuum of Need and Response (CoNR) Framework (August 2016)
- Child Protection and Family Support - Multi-Agency Referral Form (Revised August 2015)
- Presentation on the procurement exercise for the new IT system for casework management
- Team and Organisational Workforce Structure Charts (as at September 2016)
- Kirklees Council : Children and Families Service - Practice Standards Manual (March 2016)
- A One Minute Guide – the role of the Advanced Practitioner
- Notes of meetings of Kirklees Children’s Service Development Board
- Briefing paper on Schools and Community Hubs Programme
- Performance Monitoring Summary – Family Support and Child Protection
- OFSTED Inspection October 2011 - Safeguarding and Looked After Children – Summary of recommendations and implementation progress
- Flow Chart describing Intelligence Relationship between Early Help and Social Care (June 2016)
- Assured Safeguarding and Working Together (Produced by Sector Led Improvement – 2014)