

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

17th November 2015

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Performance Summary – Quarter 2

Reasons for the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with information and performance data in respect of Quarter 2 2015-16 to enable the Committee to:
 - a. Understand the factors that impact on outcomes for children in need and looked after children.
 - b. Consider opportunities for improving outcomes for children in need and looked after children.
2. This is the first attempt at a more strategic approach to reporting to Committee. It will be used as the basis for developing future reports that will give Members an understanding of cross cutting issues relating to looked after children both within the Council and wider partnerships.
3. The Quarter 2 report covers the period from 1st July 2015 to 30th September 2015.

Overview of Performance

4. Quarter 2 has been a very positive quarter for Children's Services with continued improvement being achieved in relation to most key indicators. For example, recording of initial care plans for looked after children increased to 81% from 67% in Quarter 1 and timeliness of permanence plans for looked after

children increased from 86% to 97%.

5. Work to progress the Children's Services improvement plan has continued and key areas of progress include:
 - a. Corporate Parenting Strategy - prepared for consultation and targeted for Cabinet endorsement and launch in Quarter 3. Incorporates the Joint Education and Children's Services Looked After Children's Education Delivery Plan.
 - b. Early Help and Preventative Strategy - agreed by Cabinet and public launch prepared with partners for early in Quarter 3.
 - c. Continued reduction in average social worker caseloads - from 18.9 in June 2015 to 17.5 at the end of September 2015.
 - d. Fostering Recruitment Strategy - launched with direct carer involvement and has stimulated significant response from across the city.
 - e. Single Gateway for accommodation for vulnerable young adults - Gateway developed with Communities and is ready for implementation in Quarter 3.

6. In partnership with the Central South Consortium (CSC), Looked After Children Education teams developed a strategic and operational plan. The plan develops capacity in schools and builds on existing good practice across the five local authorities (Cardiff, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Vale of Glamorgan).

7. There are evaluative systems in place to inform these planning arrangements. A large proportion of the Pupil Deprivation Grant is delegated to schools to support the education and inclusion of looked after children. The criteria for eligible spend ensures a targeted approach and the regional plan demonstrates how schools and local authorities are held to account for how they use the grant.

8. A "virtual school" data tracking system for all looked after pupils is now live and provides a profile of every looked after child to include end of Key Stage attainment data, attendance and exclusions. A learning mentor has been appointed to focus on Key Stage 4 attainment and wellbeing. Termly

assessment data will further assist in the early identification of looked after children who are achieving below age related expectations.

9. Further development of Multi Agency Meetings (MAG) and identification of underachievement / barriers to learning is planned. Discussion will take place on a termly basis and support / referral will be targeted appropriately. Schools will be fully involved in this process. Progress after additional input will be assessed and if necessary further intervention put in place until there is evidence that the child is back on track and making progress.

10. There has been some slippage in progress against some of the milestones in the Corporate Plan relating to the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and work with Education to improve educational outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The Cardiff & Vale Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy was delayed at the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The Director is to intervene and seek urgent acceleration. In relation to work with Education, early indications are that the new Personal Education Plan (PEP) process launched in Quarter 1 has not improved the timely completion and quality of PEPs. Actions to address this involve the OM receiving weekly updates on children accommodated to proactively monitor PEPs.

11. There has also been some slippage in progress against some of the milestones in the Children's Services Plan relating to:
 - a. Enhanced Fostering Scheme - the first young person was placed within the scheme during the quarter. However, from the middle of the quarter concerns about the capacity of the provider to deliver on its commitments prompted the Director to intervene. The provider's initial reaction was positive and signalled an intention to address issues.

 - b. Re-commissioning of the Supervised Contact Service - delay in the invitation to tender will result in later than anticipated implementation. The project plan has been revised and implementation planned for April 2016.

Detailed Commentary – Quarter 2 2015-16

12. The number of children who were looked after at 30th September 2015 (not including those children being looked after as part of a respite care arrangement) was 630 compared with 662 at 30th June 2015 (CS LAC 3e). This represents a rate of 8.6 children per 1,000 in Cardiff, which is lower than the all Wales rate of 9.1 per 1,000 as at 31st March 2014.
13. Initial care plans were in place prior to children becoming looked after in 81.3% (52 / 64) of cases during Quarter 2, compared with 67.0% (59 / 88) in Quarter 1 (SCC/001a). Performance against this indicator has improved in the context of a 38% decrease in the number of children starting to be looked after during the quarter (64 compared with 88 in Quarter 1).
14. 96.6% (57 / 59) of permanence plans were in place by second looked after review in Quarter 2, compared with 85.7% (48 / 56) in Quarter 1 (SCC/001b).
15. 70.3% (359 / 511) of looked after children were placed with independent sector providers at the end of Quarter 2 (CS LAC 44), showing no change from 70.3% (389 / 553) in Quarter 1. The number of children placed in independent sector residential placements decreased from 60 to 55.
16. 61.6% (315 / 511) of children in regulated placements were placed in Cardiff at the end of Quarter 2 compared with 60.4% (334 / 553) at the end of Quarter 1 (CS LAC 58). A further 80 children placed outside Cardiff were within 20 miles of their home address. 9 of the children not placed in Cardiff are placed with relative carers. For some children placement outside the authority is in their best interests, examples include children placed with family members who live outside Cardiff, children placed in specialist placements and some children who are placed in areas that are closer to their home address than some parts of the city.
17. 96.0% (458 / 477) of statutory reviews for looked after children were held within prescribed timescales in Quarter 2 compared with 93.2% (426 / 457) in Quarter 1 (SCC/021). 85.3% (407 / 477) of statutory visits were held in accordance with regulations in Quarter 2 compared with 85.1% (389 / 457) in Quarter 1

(SCC/025 – PAM).

18. All looked after children were allocated to a social worker at 30th September 2015.

19. As at 30th September 2015, 55 children were in external residential placements. Children's Services were solely responsible for funding 30 of these placements with the remaining 25 receiving contributions from Education, Health, or both. The average weekly cost per child was £3,433.31, although this ranged from £2,245 to £5,250. Contributions from Education range from 8% to 27% and Health range from 4% to 50% of the weekly cost - the percentage of the contribution is based upon factors such as how much the provider charges for education and therapy costs, the number of weeks in the school terms, the period of therapy, continuing health care needs and whether the child is statemented.

Detailed Commentary – Annual Outturn 2014-15

20. In 2014-15 performance regarding health assessments for looked after children remained stable with 73.3% of the health assessments due in the year being undertaken, compared with 73.3% in 2013-14 (SCC/039). Performance regarding dental checks improved slightly to 73.2% from 71.1% in 2013-14 (SCC/020). The number of looked after children registered with a GP within 10 working days of the start of a new placement decreased to 41.6% compared with 51.8% in 2013-14 (SCC/040). Performance in relation to GP registration is based on electronic records. It is thought that the level of performance is impacted by under-recording and is not a true reflection of actual performance against this indicator.

21. New mechanisms for recording this information were implemented during the year as part of the launch of CareFirst exemplars for looked after children. It is anticipated that this, along with the implementation of a specialised service for looked after children and care leavers will lead to improvement against these indicators.

22. In relation to the education of looked after children, the overall picture is one of stability / improvement during the year. This has resulted from focussed work over several years to improve outcomes for looked after children, including an increased focus on joint working between Children's Services and the Education Service. It is acknowledged that further work is required to build upon these improvements and joint work across Children's Services and Education is ongoing. Indicators which showed some improvement are detailed below:

- a. Primary school attendance for children looked after in Cardiff schools was 96.9%, compared with 94.7% in 2013-14 (SCC/022a).
- b. Secondary school attendance for children looked after in Cardiff schools was 93.6%, compared with 91.5% in 2013-14 (SCC/022b).
- c. Achievement of the Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 3 (reaching Level 5 in Science, Mathematics and English or Welsh) increased to 37.0% from 35.9% in 2013-14 (SCC/036).
- d. The average number of fixed term exclusion days for looked after children was 4.9 compared with 6.6 in 2013-14 (SCC/044b). This equates to 185 days for 38 children (compared with 224 days for 34 children in 2013-14). No looked after children were permanently excluded during the year, maintaining the position achieved in 2011-12 (SCC/044a) for the fourth consecutive year.

23. Indicators where performance remained stable are summarised below:

- a. Achievement of the Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 2 (reaching Level 4 in Science, Mathematics and English or Welsh) was 65.2% compared with 65.0% in 2013-14 (SCC/035).

24. The average external qualifications points score for looked after children decreased to 191 from 216 in 2013-14 (SCC/037 - NSI), although the target of 180 was met.

25. 20.4% of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were in place compared with 23.9% in 2013-14 (SCC/024). The process for completing timely PEPs was reviewed

and adjusted in order to simplify and speed up the process to enable social workers to have a more realistic chance of completing the process within required timescales. Briefings were provided to social workers, teachers and foster carers jointly, in readiness for implementation on 1st May 2015. Of the 183 children without a timely PEP, 35 have a completed PEP and another 105 have a PEP that is in the process of being completed.

26. Early indications are that the new PEP process has not improved the timely completion and quality of PEPs. Actions to address this involve the Operational Manager for Looked After Children receiving:

- a. Weekly updates on PEP performance.
- b. Information on children accommodated in the past week in order to proactively monitor PEPs.
- c. Progress in relation to timely completion of PEPs.

27. During the last financial year Children's Services made good progress to stabilise plans for each looked after child to secure permanent alternative long term placements including the following options:

- a. Adoption
- b. Long term foster placements
- c. Moves to best value placements
- d. Returning children placed out of area back to Cardiff

A significant consequence of securing better permanent placements for individual looked after children is a rise in the number of children experiencing a non-transitional school move and 3 or more placements during the year. 17.8% (68 / 382) of compulsory school age children who were looked after at 31 March 2015 experienced a non-transitional school move during the year, compared with 13.3% (44 / 331) in 2013-14 (SCC/002 - NSI). 10.5% (68 / 650) of children who were looked after at 31st March 2015 had 3 or more placements during the year, compared with 8.3% (51 / 611) in 2013-14 (SCC/004 – NSI/PAM). This approach is in the best interest of the children and is reflected in the overall positive findings of the Looked After Children inspection which took place in 2014, and by the findings identified by the

Independent Support Team around services for looked after children. This is also consistent with the outcome focussed ethos within the new Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. Although this strategy has led to positive outcomes for children, Children's Services did not reflect the likely impact of these moves when undertaking its target setting exercise.

28. In respect of young people entitled to leaving care services, 60.5% (263 / 435) had a Pathway Plan as required in 2014-15 compared with 63.2% (254 / 402) in 2013-14 (SCC/041a - NSI). An additional 57 young people have Pathway Plans that are in the process of being completed. Performance in relation to pathway planning for care leavers has been reviewed and it has been determined that the primary factors affecting performance are plans being started but not completed and young people choosing not to engage. Remedial work is being undertaken to meet the statutory requirement for provision of a pathway plan for all care leavers, including those that do not wish to have them. The work being undertaken includes a review of processes and documents that will be implemented later this year supported by best practice training in September 2015.

29. 39.8% of care leavers had a Personal Adviser compared with 40.0% in 2013-14. Children's Services established additional Personal Adviser posts to secure significant improvement in the completion of pathway plans. The full benefits of this were not realised in year, but we expect significantly improved performance in 2015-16.

30. Children's Services was in touch with 90.5% (57 / 63) of care leavers at the age of 19 during the year, compared with 94.0% (47 / 50) (SCC/033d - NSI). The service attempts to keep in touch with all care leavers as required, however the young people determine for themselves whether they wish to respond and remain in contact. The creation of the Personal Adviser posts referred to above will enable us to improve performance in 2015/16 where young people are content to respond and remain in contact with the service.

31. 91.2% (52 / 57) of care leavers we were in touch with were in suitable non-emergency accommodation (SCC/033e - NSI) compared with 91.5% (43 / 47) in

2013-14. As part of the Council's Organisational Development Programme, additional cross-Directorate resources have been dedicated to improve access to non-emergency accommodation for care leavers. We now have clear lines of communication with colleagues in Housing and a fundamental agreement that all care leavers will have access to appropriate housing and will not be placed in unsuitable accommodation (e.g. bed and breakfast).

32. 56.1% (32 / 57) of care leavers at 19 were in education, training or employment (SCC/033f - NSI) compared with 53.2% (25 / 47) in 2013-14. This exceeded the 55% target. The Council Traineeship Scheme for Looked After Children was launched on 25th April 2014 and has started to have a positive impact on this indicator.

Financial Implications

33. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Legal Implications

34. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- Consider the contents of the report and report any comments to the Cabinet Member.

MARIE ROSENTHAL
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10th November 2015

TONY YOUNG
Director of Social Services