

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	19th March 2012
TITLE:	Child Protection Activity and Performance
WARD:	ALL

### AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

#### List of attachments to this report:

None

### 1. THE ISSUE

Further to the Panel's discussion of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2010/11 and Work Programme for 2012/13, this report details progress in respect of the key indicators of child protection activity as reported in that Annual Report. The report details the position at the end of the third quarter of 2011/12.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

Note the report and the actions being taken in respect of the reported performance.

Request further performance reports from the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in order to maintain an overview of the Council, and partner agencies', child protection activity and performance.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### 4. THE REPORT

4.1 The report provides the Panel with a progress report in respect of the key indicators of child protection activity, as included in the Annual Report and Business Plan of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Progress is shown in relation to previous years and in comparison with other Local Authorities (most recent national data available) and is reported at the end of each quarter. This report details the position at the end of the third quarter for 2011/12 (colour coded to indicate status of performance to end of year target). The paragraphs below provide commentary, performance summaries and detail remedial actions where appropriate.

4.2 As detailed in discussions at previous Panel meetings, work is progressing to identify indicators which will reflect outcomes for children rather than report primarily

on process issues. This work is being informed by the current national consultation document 'Post Munro Review Performance indicators' which has outlined proposals for Nationally Collected Information Items and Local Information. In particular, the Government is considering whether there is a case for removing nationally prescribed timescales for the completion of initial and core assessments. Work is being progressed to test out in a number of Local Authorities, and a decision about future arrangements is expected in the Spring. Notwithstanding, we are progressing work to detail local performance indicators (for example, minimum number of days between referral received and child seen: days between referral and care plan shared with family) to supplement the national indicators. These will be included in future reports to the Panel.

- 4.3 Since the last report to the Panel, there has been an announced Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspection of the Council's Children Service and Health's safeguarding and looked after children services (January 2012). This has identified strengths and areas for improvement (which are detailed in a separate report to the Panel) including the need to achieve consistency in the quality and timeliness of assessments and improve the quality of staff supervision, recording of Managers' decisions, and managerial oversight of assessments and plans. Actions are in place to address these areas for improvement and to use the learning points from the inspection to inform the re-design of Children's Social Care.

#### **4.4 Number of children subject to child protection plans**

4.4.1 This is not a national performance indicator, but a significant indicator of child protection activity, though it should be interpreted with caution. A child protection plan is made following a multi-agency case conference and assessment that a child is at continuing risk of significant harm or impairment of health and development. Early intervention and the provision of services can result in a child's needs to being met any earlier stage, thereby preventing the escalation to risk of significant harm and the need for a child protection plan – resulting in a smaller number/percentage of children with plans. On the other hand, small numbers could be the result of inappropriately high thresholds for intervention.

4.4.2 Our thresholds for intervention are monitored by the LSCB's Safeguarding Children Sub Committee and reported to the LSCB. The Children's Service regularly audits thresholds for interventions. These are considered to be appropriately and consistently set and understood by other agencies.

4.4.3 There was a steady increase in the number of children with protection plans throughout 2010/11 with a marked increase in the final quarter – 106 represented the highest number since the late 1990's. The Children's Service investigated this position and determined that the increase has been the result of a combination of factors (the complexity of new cases and risks being identified: cases where long standing but low level concerns have increased to become risks of significant harm: the quality of some assessments and multi-agency evaluations of the risk of harm resulting in cautious decisions about the need for some protection plans) – and took actions to address these factors which have resulted in an appropriate reduction in the number of children with protection plans and more children in need plans – whilst ensuring that protection plans are in place for all who require them.

4.4.4 The current figure (81) is close to the average for the past five years. Reports regarding the increase in numbers in 2010/11 and the actions taken to investigate and evaluate the reasons have been considered by the Local Safeguarding Children Board at its meetings in June 2011 and December 2011.

#### **4.5 Child Protection Plans lasting two years or more (NI 64)**

4.5.1 This national performance indicator is used to indicate the effectiveness of the child protection plan in eliminating and significantly reducing the risk of significant harm – and is based upon research evidence that this is most likely to be achieved within a two year period. If not, the Local Authority should consider whether action is required to remove children from care in which they are assessed as being a continuing risk of significant harm. There are circumstances in which plans may exceed 2 years – for example when there have been changes in household composition that required further assessments: when addressing issues of neglect and improvements in parenting are being affected but further improvements are required and the assessment is that these can be achieved; when working with parents whose mental health difficulties impact upon their parenting.

4.5.2 For this performance indicator, a low score is indicative of good performance.

4.5.3 The improvement noted throughout 2010/11 (which resulted in the end of year figure being only slightly off target), has been maintained and is on target for 2011/12. It must be noted that these percentages represent a small number of children and families. We have processes in place to review the circumstances of each child. Each child protection plan is reviewed by a multi-agency case conference, and the decision to continue with child protection plans quality assured by the LSCB's Safeguarding Children Sub Committee.

#### **4.6 Children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time (NI 65)**

4.6.1 This national indicator is used to measure the effectiveness of child protection plans in eliminating risks of significant harm – i.e. the risks have been eliminated, do not reappear and necessitate a further child protection plan. In practice, this is determined by the quality of services provided and work undertaken with parents and child(ren) through the plan: the quality of assessment of risks of significant harm and actions taken: the provision and accessibility of any support services subsequent to the child protection plan.

4.6.2 For this performance indicator, a low score is indicative of good performance.

4.6.3 Our performance in this area had been strong for a number of years – exceeding both the national and family of Local Authorities' performance. As noted in previous reports, performance throughout 2010/11 was however off target (and above national and comparator positions). Gradual improvements have been achieved throughout the first three quarters of 2011/12 and it is now possible that the end of year target will be achieved. We are now closer to the level of comparator authorities. Absolute numbers are small but performance did raise questions about the overall effectiveness of the services provided by agencies at the conclusion of child protection plans to prevent risks from re-emerging. Ensuring that these are in place and consistently accessed by families is central to the re-design of Children's Social Care

Service currently underway and has been reported to the LSCB. This should effect further improvements in the longer term.

4.6.4 Absolute numbers are small but performance did raise questions about the overall effectiveness of the services provided by agencies at the conclusion of child protection plans to prevent risks from re-emerging. Ensuring that these are in place and consistently accessed by families is central to the re-design of Children's Social Care Service currently underway and has been reported to the LSCB. This should effect further improvements in the longer term.

#### **4.7 Child protection cases which were reviewed within timescales (NI 67)**

4.7.1 It is important that all child protection plans are reviewed (by multi agency case conferences) to ensure that they are being implemented and remain appropriate to a child's needs and assessed risk of significant harm. Also to determine whether any further actions are required. Child protection plans must be reviewed within 3 months of the initial case conference and within (at least) six monthly intervals thereafter.

4.7.2 For this performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.

4.7.3 Our performance is 100% and has been for the past eight years.

4.7.4 Although this indicator is no longer part of the National Indicator set for safeguarding, we will continue to monitor this area of performance given its importance in underpinning good and timely planning.

#### **4.8 Referrals to Children's Social Care going to initial assessments (NI 68)**

4.8.1 It is important that the Council responds to and addresses concerns in a timely and efficient way and ensures that all referrals to Children's Social Care be followed up where appropriate. This indicator is a proxy for several issues – the appropriateness of referrals coming into social care, which can show whether local agencies are working well together: and the thresholds which are being applied in Children's Social Care at a local level. Revisions to national guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010) has made explicit the need to ensure that all referrals receive an initial assessment. Work was undertaken throughout 2010/11 to significantly lift performance – this was achieved and exceeded targets – and has been built upon in the first three quarters of 2011/12. The Lean Review of Children's Social Care, which is informing the re-design of the delivery of the Service, will be used to reinforce this improvement.

4.8.2 It is important to note that the numbers of referrals received by social care has not remained static, indeed there has been a substantial increase between 2008-9 and 2011-12 (year to date). If this trend continues the number of referrals will have increased from 1140 in 2008-9 to 1750 in 2011-12 i.e. an increase of 53%.

#### **4.9 Initial assessments by Children's Social Care carried out within ten working days of referral (NI 59) – (previously seven working days)**

4.9.1 Initial assessments are an important indicator of how quickly services can respond when a child is thought to be at risk of serious harm or thought to be a child in need. As the assessment involves a range of local agencies, this indicator also shows how well multi-agency arrangements are established.

The child or young person must be seen, and their wishes and feelings taken into account, within the completion of the initial assessment.

4.9.2 For the performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.

4.9.3 Work completed to clear outstanding assessments at the end of 2010/11 meant that the Service was in a stronger position at the beginning of 2011/12 to significantly improve performance. This was achieved for Q1. That strong performance was, however, disrupted by capacity issues in the Locality Team and secondments to the re-design team during Q2 – actions have been taken to address these impacts and to lift performance throughout the rest of the year. This has been achieved and performance at the end of Q3 is approaching the target for the year, but given further capacity issues in the Locality Team is not likely to be achieved. In addition to the increase in referrals outlined above, the percentage of referrals that are subsequently taken forward to Initial Assessment has risen from 35% in 2008-9 to 74% in 2011-12. This means that the service carried out 400 Initial Assessments in 2008-9 compared to a projected figure of 1295 Initial Assessments in 2011-12. This is a three-fold increase in Initial Assessment workload with only three additional posts added to the social work workforce during this period. Sustaining this level of performance and also improving quality of work cannot be fully disassociated from the level of resource available to carry out this work.

4.9.4 The appropriateness of prescribed timescales for initial assessments was considered within the work of the Munro Review Group (national review of social work and child protection) with whom we have been actively engaged – and Munro has recommended that the timescale is dropped and the focus is upon the quality of assessments as a continuous process. The Government is currently considering this recommendation and has committed to providing guidance in Spring 2012. There may be future scope for determining local indicators in terms of timeliness and quality and the Service has already started to give this matter consideration.

#### **4.10 Core assessments by Children's Social Care Services that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement (NI 60)**

4.10.1 Core assessments are an in depth assessment of a child and their family, as defined in the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. There are also the means by which section 47 (child protection) enquiries are undertaken following a strategy discussion. It is important that the Council investigates and addresses concerns in a timely and efficient way, and that those in receipt of an assessment have a clear idea of how quickly this should be completed. Successful meeting of the timescales can also indicate effective joint working where multi-agency assessment is required.

4.10.2 Work completed to clear outstanding assessments at the end of 2010/11 meant that the Service was in a stronger position at the beginning of 2011/12 to significantly improve performance. This was achieved in Q1 and Q2 and a further improvement in Q3 means that performance is close to target for the whole year. We have used the learning from the Lean Review of Social Care processes to inform better practice, and the re-design phase is testing out new systems, organisation of work, practice, approach to and recording of assessments. The learning from this is being used to inform the re-design of our front of house services, and the proposed enhanced team will complete all

core assessments. This will bring more consistency in both timeliness and quality.

4.10.3 For this performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.

4.10.4 As in the case of Initial Assessments, the number of Core Assessments undertaken has also risen between 2008-9 and 2011-12. Because these assessments take a longer period of time to complete, the comparison given here is 2008-9 and 2010-11. During this period of time the number of Core Assessments rose from 205 to 270 i.e. a 32% increase. It is anticipated that there will be a further increase in completed Core Assessments in 2011-12. Again, this increase has been achieved within existing staffing levels.

4.10.5 The appropriateness of prescribed timescales for core assessments was considered within the work of the Munro Review Group (national review of social work and child protection) and Munro has recommended that the timescale is dropped and the focus is upon the quality of assessments as a continuous process. The Government is currently considering this recommendation and has committed to providing guidance in Spring 2012. There may be scope for determining local indicators in the future.

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

5.1 The risks associated with ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements are assessed and managed by the LSCB (which receives quarterly performance reports) and its constituent members. This report has been seen and commented upon by the Independent Chair of the LSCB. Within the Council, these issues are identified within the Service Risk Register.

## **6 EQUALITIES**

6.1 Promoting diversity and supporting individual identity and recognising and valuing the racial and cultural diversity of Bath and North East Somerset's communities and a commitment for anti-discriminatory practice are values underpinning the work of the LSCB.

6.2 An equalities impact assessment was completed in respect of the LSCB's 3 Year Strategic Plan 2008-11 and the Annual Report and Business Plan 2010/11, and has been completed in respect of the LSCB Annual Report 2010/11 and Work Programme for 2011/12.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

7.1 Staff; Other B&NES Services; Stakeholders/Partners

7.2 The LSCB and its constituent member agencies receive and review quarterly performance reports.

7.3 Child Protection Activity Reports are also presented to the Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing at each of its meetings.

## 8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 **Select from:** Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Human Resources; Property; Young People; Human Rights; Corporate; Health & Safety; Impact on Staff; Other Legal Considerations

## 9 ADVICE SOUGHT

[Authors are asked to ensure that these officers or their senior representatives are consulted. This paragraph can be amended if appropriate.]

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

<b>Contact person</b>	<b>Maurice Lindsay</b> – Divisional Director, Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Service on behalf of the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board  Tel: 01225 396289 Email: <a href="mailto:Maurice.Lindsay@Bathnes.gov.uk">Maurice.Lindsay@Bathnes.gov.uk</a>
<b>Background papers</b>	Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2010/11 and Work Programme 2011/12  Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2011
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	

Child Protection activity / performance indicators	2009/10 England	2009/10 Family	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Plan	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Plan	2011/12 Quarterly			
							Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4*
1. Number of children subject to child protection plan			Total = 71	N/A	106	N/A	104	88	81	
2. Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more (NI 64)	6	8.3	18.9	8	10.4	8	8.8	6.3	7.0	
3. Children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time (NI 65)	13	13.1	11.4	10	23.5	12	18.2	17.4	14.8	
4. Child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (NI 67)	99	98.9	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
5. Referrals to Children's Social Care going on to initial assessments (NI 68)	64	75	51.2	50	73.9	53	79.3	73	73.9	
6. Initial assessments by Children's Social Care carried out within ten working days of referral (NI 59) *	75.5%*	68.5%*	67.6*	77*	67.5	78	83.7	67.6	73.7	
7. Core assessments by Children's Social Care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement	78.1	66.3	78.5	80	59.3	80	65.2	75.5	79.1	

\* Previous performance indicator was for 7 working days