

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	18th July 2011
TITLE:	Child Protection Activity and Performance
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report:	
None	

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 Further to the Panel's discussion of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Review of the 3 Year Strategic Plan 2008-2011 and Annual Report and Business Plan 2010/11, 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 final quarter of 2010/11.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

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

2.2 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.

2.3 Note that future reports will seek to detail performance in relation to outcomes rather than process indicators

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 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 and is reported at the end of each quarter. This report details the position at the end of the fourth quarter for 2010/11.

4.2 Following discussions at the LSCB and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board, work is progressing to identify indicators which will reflect outcomes for children rather than simply report on process issues. This work will need to take into account the recommendations of the Munro Review of Child Protection (final report published 10th May 2011) and any subsequent scope for reporting on locally identified performance indicators which may follow from the Implementation Panel formed by Central Government to consider its response to Munro's recommendations. Locally, the Children's Social Care Service is taking forward work to record and collate qualitative feedback from child, parents and other professionals to illustrate whether and how work has made the child safer.

4.3 The table below details the performance for 2008/09 and comparisons with England and our family of Local Authorities (most recent national data available): our performance for 2009/10: the targets set for 2010/11 and our performance at the end of the final quarter of 2010/11 (colour coded to indicate the status of performance in relation to target – Red/Green) – and therefore the performance at the end of the year. The paragraphs below provide commentary, performance summaries and detail remedial actions where appropriate.

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. Our thresholds for intervention are monitored by the LSCB's Safeguarding Children Sub Committee and reported to the LSCB. The Children's Service recent audit of our thresholds for interventions and concluded that these are appropriately and consistently set. We keep this under regular review. The recent (January 2011) Ofsted unannounced annual inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in Children's Social Care once again found the thresholds to be appropriate and consistently implemented.

4.4.2 There has been a steady increase in the number of children with protection plans throughout 2010/11 with a marked increase in the final quarter – 106 represents the highest number since the late 1990's. The Children's Service has 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 has taken actions to address these factors which are likely to result 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.

4.4.3 It is worth noting that neighbouring Children's Service have also reported a significant increase in their numbers of protection plans during 2010/11.

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 Improvement noted at the end of the third quarter in the percentage of children with protection plans lasting more than 2 years has been maintained, and the end of year figure is slightly off target – and represents a small number of children and families. We have processes in place to review the circumstances of each child. Each child protection plan has been 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.
- 4.6.4 As noted in previous reports, performance during 2010/11 has been off target (and is above national and comparator positions) but numbers are small. We continue to audit all cases to ensure that there are not any shortfalls in services that have contributed to the need for further protection plans. Further work is required to ensure the continuation of appropriate services to children at the end of the protection plan – reports have been submitted to the Children's Trust Board and the LSCB to promote this.

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 seven years.

4.7.4 Although this indicator will cease to form part of the National Indicator set for safeguarding, however, 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. The revised national guidance within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 has necessitated changes in practice and new targets will be set for subsequent years. Working Together makes explicit the need to ensure that all referrals receive an initial assessment. We have identified some inconsistencies between duty managers but are now on course with greater clarity, helped by new process mapping exercise. We anticipate improved performance and working towards 100%. The lift in performance has been maintained throughout 2010/11 and will be built upon in 2011/12.

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

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 Our performance has steadily improved during the course of 2010/11 but we have still missed our end of year target. As stated in the table the new standard for this PI is 10 working days but we have been required to report on 7 working days as well for 2010/11 only. Clearing a backlog of outstanding assessments impacted adversely on our performances for the first quarter which was significantly below target. Additional staffing resources were allocated to address these positions and to track completion throughout the 7 and 10 day period. Corrective actions have lifted week-to-week performance (especially in respect of new indicators of 10 working days) and this has been underpinned by early work within the lean review of social care processes to improve response rates and quality as well as timeliness. But work to ensure that there are no outstanding assessments at the end of the performance year has adversely impacted upon the end of year performance which is below target – but should put us in a stronger position at the beginning of 2011/12 to significantly improve performance. 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.

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

4.10.3 Corrective actions to lift performance in respect of the timeliness of completion have not effected the level of improvement required, due to capacity and practice issues (which are now being addressed), and the end of year target has not been attained. This was unlikely due to a backlog from 2009/10 that adversely impacted that year's performance. Actions have been taken to avoid that impacting upon 2011/12's performance.

4.10.4 The Lean Review of social care processes has identified actions which will improve future performance, and has focused upon the quality of core assessments as well as timeliness – finding it to be strong in some areas but variable in others. Enhanced training and supervision arrangements have been put in place to address this. This work will be underpinned by the work of the Quality Improvement Manager (to be appointed shortly).

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.

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. 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 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Young People; Human Rights.

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

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.

Contact person	Maurice Lindsay – Divisional Director, Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Service on behalf of the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Tel: 01225 396289 Email: Maurice.Lindsay@Bathnes.gov.uk
Background papers	Annual Report on the effectiveness of the LSCB arrangements – Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting 12 th July 2010
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

Child Protection activity / performance indicators	2008/09 England	2008/09 Family	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Plan	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Plan	2010/11 Quarterly			
							Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1. Number of children subject to child protection plan			Total = 78	N/A	Total = 71		73	74	81	106
2. Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more (NI 64)	6	8.3	15.7	7	18.9	8	18	20.9	12.5	10.4
3. Children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time (NI 65)	13	13.1	7.7	12	11.4	10	21.9	22.1	25.6	21.6
4. Child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (NI 67)	99	98.9	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
5. Referrals to Children's Social Care going on to initial assessments (NI 68)	64	75	35	50	51.2	50	67.9	72.8	72.6	81.5
6. Initial assessments by Children's Social Care carried out within seven working days of referral (NI 59) *	72	59.6	55.1	77	67.6	77	34.9	40.1	45.6	62.6**
							48.2 – For 10 working days 53.6 61.3 63.5			
7. Core assessments by Children's Social Care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement	78	77.6	75.5	80	78.5	80		33.1	37.6	58**

* The new NI is 10 working days but we are required to report on performance in 7 working days and 10 working days for 2010/11 only.

** As confirmed in the CIN census for 2010/11.