

## **Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing Report**

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Report Title: Child Protection Activity Performance Report**

**Agenda Item: 8**

**List of attachments to this report: None**

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### **Summary**

#### **Purpose**

- 1 To provide the Board 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 second quarter for 2011/12.

As detailed in discussions at previous Board meetings, work is progressing to identify indicators which will reflect outcomes for children rather than report primarily on process issues. This work is taking into account the recommendations of the Munro Review of Child Protection (final report published 10<sup>th</sup> May 2011) and will need to consider any 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. In particular, the Government is considering whether there is a case for removing nationally prescribed timescales for the completion of initial and core assessments. 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. This is being used to inform individual case and child protection plans and we should be in a position to provide collated feedback in future reports.

#### **Recommendation**

- 2 The Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing is asked to note the report and actions being taken and receive updated performance reports at each meeting of the Board. Future reports will detail performance in relation to outcomes rather than process indicators.

#### **Rationale**

- 3 Considering the report represents good practice and illustrates the corporate commitment to safeguarding children, and provides a basis for holding the LSCB to account and being challenged by the LSCB in matters of safeguarding.

#### **Other Options Considered**

- 4 None

#### **Financial Implications**

- 5 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### **Risk Management**

- 6 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.

### **Equality issues**

- 7 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.

### **Legal Issues**

- 8 There are no legal issues requiring consideration.

### **Engagement & Involvement**

- 9 The LSCB and its constituent members receive and review quarterly performance reports. This report has been viewed by the Council monitoring officer and section 151 officer.

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		
2. Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more (NI 64)	6	8.3	18.9	8	10.4	8	8.8	6.3		
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		
4. Child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (NI 67)	99	98.9	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**		
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		
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		

\* Previous performance indicator was for 7 working days

\*\* Provisional figure for Q2: does not yet include referrals dealt with by the re-design team

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**The Report**

1. The table above details the performance for 2009/10 and comparisons with England and our family of Local Authorities (most recent national data available): our performance for 2010/11: the targets set for 2011/12 and our performance at the end of the first and second quarters of 2011/12 (colour coded to indicate status of performance to target – Red/Amber/Green).

**Commentary, Performance summary and remedial actions where appropriate**

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

2. 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 most 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. 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 cautions 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.

As previously noted neighbouring Children's Service also reported a significant increase in their numbers of protection plans during 2010/11.

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

3. 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. For this performance indicator, a low score is indicative of good performance.
5. 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.

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

6. 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.
7. For this performance indicator, a low score is indicative of good performance.
8. 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 off target (and above national and comparator positions). Gradual improvements have been achieved in Q1 and Q2 but performance remains off end of year target and above the level of comparator authorities. Absolute numbers are small but performance must 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. Work progressing across the LSCB, and quality assured by its subcommittee to address this and lessons learned from the lean review of social care services are informing the redesign of that service and the development of step down services. In combination, these should effect further improvements in the longer term.

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

9. 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.
10. For this performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.
11. Our performance is 100% and has been for the past eight years.
12. Although this indicator is no longer 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.

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

13. 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 two quarters of 2011/12. The Lean Review of Children's Social Care, which is informing the re-design of the delivery of the Service, has reinforced this improvement in terms of both quantity and quality of work.

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

14. 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.

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

16. 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 has, however, been disrupted by capacity issues in the Locality Team and secondments to the re-design team – actions have been taken to address these impacts and to lift performance throughout the rest of the year. The introduction of new processes within the re-design team is improving the consistency of initial assessments and should also improve the timeliness of their completion.

17. 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 December 2011. There may be future scope for determining local indicators in terms of timeliness and quality.

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

18. 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.

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

20. 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 has been achieved in Q1 and Q2 and 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.

21. 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 December 2011. There may be scope for determining local indicators in the future.

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<b>Background papers</b>	

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