



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Young People's Scrutiny Committee
29 January 2014

<u>Item</u>
<b>6</b>
<u>Public</u>

## QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

**Responsible Officer** Karen Bradshaw  
e-mail: Karen.Bradshaw@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 252407 Fax:

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The report summarises the latest performance indicators in relation to Social Care for Children and Young people (Appendix 1) as at quarter 2 2013/14.
- 1.2 Most of the indicators remain strong in relation to statistical and national neighbours. These results are achieved in a context of increasing levels of demand especially with regards to the levels of looked after children and children with a child protection plan.
- 1.3 The report includes information from the quality assurance process especially from the monitoring activity undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Officers capturing qualitative information with regards to the processes and outcomes achieved.

### 2. Recommendations

Committee to take note of the findings of the report, raise any issues as appropriate and identify topics for further detailed scrutiny.

## REPORT

### 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 Poor performance could have implications for vulnerable people (including children) who are supported by Council services and the economic growth in Shropshire. In turn, there may be significant financial, legal and

reputational risk to the Council, Schools (including Academies), and partners from across the public and voluntary and independent care sectors.

3.2 Effective monitoring and follow-up against key measures of success provides the opportunity to manage risks and ensure that Children and Young People in Shropshire remain safe and achieve their desired outcomes. Increasingly, performance reporting will focus on the impact of commissioning decisions by the Council, linking directly with the management of contracts and how effective the Council is at delivering its outcomes.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 This report does not have any direct financial implications, but presents service information to support decision making. Accountable officers, senior managers and key decision makers may use the information to inform actions or interventions for improving service performance and the prioritisation and use of resources.

#### **5. Background**

5.1 There is increasing demand on our Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Teams. The number of looked after children continued the upwards trend since 2012. However, the latest benchmarking data for 2012/13 (see Appendix 1) show that Shropshire has the lowest rate of LAC per 10,000 under 18s compared with similar authorities and is well below the national averages. This is in line with the efforts to ensure that only and all the appropriate cases are entering the looked after system and the checks made as part of the quality assurance process confirms this approach.

5.2 More children are also becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP). We have continued to have a greater proportion of under 18s per 10,000 population subject to a CPP than other similar councils for the past 13 months and in August 2013 there was an unusual spike in numbers, the highest figure seen since March 2010.

5.3 The past 3 months has also seen a substantial increase in the percentage of Children with a 2nd or subsequent CPP within 2 years of the previous one ceasing rising from 3.5% at the end of June to 15.8% at the end of September. Audit and quality assurance activity has been undertaken and confirms that there has been a robust response to those cases, particularly those that have had a period of re-registration within a short (under 2 years) timeframe, including initiating pre proceedings processes. Implementation of the Public Law Outline and specifically the use of pre proceedings to highlight to parents the level of concern and potential for proceedings if the children continue to suffer significant harm as well as the more timely care proceedings process is being monitored and we will evaluate the impact of this on the child protection process. There are multiple reasons for the need for a subsequent Child Protection plan including the usual pattern of changes in circumstances for many of the families involved with the service. A priority development is the "Think Family" and solution focused approach to working with children in need of support earlier and for longer offering a range of

options that meet the needs of the child, young person and family. These developments will impact on the offer of support before and in step down from children social work services promoting sustained change in improved outcomes for children and young people and as such reducing the need for repeat social work assessments and repeat child protection plans.

5.4 Over the last two quarters, revised operational decisions at ICT (Initial Contact Team) regarding recording of contacts have resulted in a significant increase in the number of referrals for social work intervention. The new approach aims to ensure even more clarity regarding the application of thresholds especially in relationship with partner organisations. The Munro reports and Working Together 2013 highlight the importance of professional social work advice being made available to all those working with children and families in universal services and Early Help. We are providing this advice and guidance to support professionals to identify and manage risk indicators whilst promoting the offer of early help to families. Changes in the Referral outcome on care first to identify this work is being made so we can better quantify this activity at the front door. Better feedback is provided to the other professionals working with children and young people in understanding the outcomes of referrals they are making.

5.5 Another consequence of the operational decisions at ICT is the sustained increase in the number of referrals recorded from agencies, some of which resulted in no further action (NFA). Such referrals from the Police are now higher than they have been for at least the last 12 months, and Education referrals ending with no further action have also increased slightly since the end of June.

5.6 The proportion of LAC with three or more placement moves during the year (placement stability 3+ moves) is better than the expected level for the end of September 2013. However, performance regarding the long term placement stability (2.5 years long term LAC in the same placement over the last two years) has seen a downwards trend in the last three months. At the end of September performance was below expected level for the first time in the last two years. A detailed analysis of the cases that impacted on this evolution is taking place to understand how the changes in placement affected the care planning for the child and the findings and actions taken will be reported in the next performance report. In the meantime this area will be placed under increased level of monitoring.

5.7 Another potential impact of the increased numbers of LAC is the increased level of pressure on available resources; for August and September the % of new LAC placed more than 20 miles from home at 46% is higher than expected (40%) and exceed the levels reached 12 months before (34.8%). This situation is also going to be monitored in a more focused way to ensure the outcomes for our LAC continue to be positive.

5.8 Good performance achieved last year regarding the speed of initial assessments and core assessments has been maintained during the last two quarters of this financial year.

5.9 Shropshire compares favourably (second best in the similar authorities' group) regarding the end of year results for adoptions (as a percentage of the cases that ceased to be looked after). This has been noted by Edward Timpson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families in a recent letter of acknowledgement (see Appendix 2). During the last two quarters this level of performance was maintained.

5.10 The Adoption scorecard produced by the Government has been published. In line with locally produced information it shows that the timeliness of placements of youngsters in Shropshire has continued to improve, building on good results of the previous year when it was evident that we were not experiencing some of the delays that other authorities were facing, particularly in respect court proceedings.

5.11 Our three residential homes for children continue to provide effective assessment and support enabling children to either return home or remain looked after in a stable placement. Ofsted inspections have rated two of the homes as 'Outstanding' with the third as 'Good'. Work to develop the range and capacity of support services to young people and families preventing the need for Local Authority Care is a priority and we are reviewing how we might better use our skilled and experienced residential care staff to support the Edge of Care work and promote more timely and sustained rehabilitation to parental where this is in the best interests of the young person.

5.12 The rates of teenage pregnancy in the county is further reducing. The data shows that the number of conceptions per 1,000 females aged under 18 in Shropshire for 2011 was 23.7, a reduction from the figure of 34 per 1,000 in 1998 which is used as a baseline at the start of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. This is significantly below the 2011 figure for England which is 30.7 conceptions per 1,000 and 26.3 for similar authorities.

5.13 The information monitored as part of the quality assurance framework shows good results in a number of areas such as review reports providing evidence based analysis and with clear, outcome based recommendations, agencies following the child protection plans and conferences with key family members present. More is being done to enhance the voice and participation of the child in child protection conferences and a consultation form (similar to that used for LAC Reviews) has been designed with the help of young people. This is now available and should be utilised and we should see an increase in this figure over time. The measure will change to demonstrate the participation of children rather than the pure attendance of children in Child Protection Conferences at the end of the year.

## 6. Additional Information

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b> Cllr Ann Hartley
<b>Local Member</b> All Members
<b>Appendices</b> Appendix 1 – Children’s Social Care Indicators Appendix 2 – Letter from Edward Timpson MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families