



Committee and date

People Overview
Committee

20 November 2019

Item

Public

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE REPORT – Q2 2019/20

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents People Overview Scrutiny Committee with Children's Social Care performance measures for Quarter 2 2019/20.

2. Recommendations

- A. Members consider the report and identify whether there are any specific topics or emerging issues they would like to consider in more detail.

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 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 the desired outcomes.
- 3.2 Poor performance could have implications for vulnerable families who are supported by Council services. In turn, there may be significant financial, legal and reputational risk to the Council, Schools (and Academies), and partners from across the public and voluntary and independent care sectors.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 This report does not have any direct financial implications.

5. Introduction

- 5.1 Each of the three social care work areas covered by this report contain a range of associated performance measures. The frequency of the availability of the data varies from monthly and quarterly updates to annual updates.
- 5.2 A key theme of the past 18 months in Children's Services has been increased level of demand. This increase largely happened between the financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

While, in many areas of the service, growth has stabilised during 2019/20, demand continues at the higher level and has not returned to the lower 2017/18 levels.

6. Front Door

- 6.1 8,422 contacts were received by Children's Services between 1st April and 30th September 2019. This is higher than in previous years, and a linear forecast suggests a year-end figure of around 16,800. This would represent a 22% increase against the 2018/19 year-end position of 13,760.

Around 44% of contacts this year required some further action, including updating existing cases (21%), the creation of a social care referral (9.2%) and the provision of information, advice and signposting (8.1%).

- 6.2 In 2018/19, referrals to Children's Social Care were a significant growth area, increasing 25.9% to 1822 at year end, from 1447 In 2017/18.

In 19/20 to date there have been 915 referrals, a 3% increase on the 888 received in the same period in 2018/19. This data suggests growth in this area may have slowed and stabilised at the increased level.

Despite the increase, benchmarking data indicates that Shropshire's referral levels are below most of its statistical neighbour (SN) group. The average for the group being 501.76 referrals for every 10,000 U18 residents, where Shropshire's y/e 18/19 figure gives a rate of 304.7.

The main referral source this year has been the Police, followed by education, family members and health services. These levels are largely consistent with data seen across England.

- 6.3 In 19/20 to date, 17% of referrals had a previous referral recorded within the preceding 12 months. 17% was also the year-end figure for 2018/19 suggesting the re-referral rates remain static.

Shropshire has comparatively low levels of re-referrals, with the SN average being 21.2% and the England average being 21.9%.

- 6.4 On average, 286 social work assessments are completed each month, though this figure includes review assessments, as well as those following on from referral.

At Q2, 85% of assessments had been completed within the recommended 45 working days. This is a fall from the same point in 2018/19 where 94.8% were within timescale. This decrease coincided with the introduction of the new case management system, Liquid Logic, suggesting the implementation may have impacted timeliness. Workshops are being held with frontline staff, to look at all areas of the service to identify and resolve issues.

Despite the fall in timeliness, Shropshire is still performing at a higher level than both statistical neighbours (77.1%) and the England average (82.7%)

7. Case Management

- 7.1 At Q2 19/20, there were 398 looked after children in Shropshire. This is an increase from the 395 children looked after at the end of 18/19.

The increase in looked after children has slowed during 19/20, with a net increase of 3 children to date. In 2018/19 there was a net increase of 58 children over the full year. Data suggests this is due to fewer children becoming looked after, as numbers ceasing to be looked after remained stable.

The rate of children looked after has increased during Q2 to 66.6 children per 10,000 U18s. This is higher than the SN average (56.9) and England average (64), though this benchmarking data is from y/e 2017/18.

- 7.2 The rate of children subject to Child Protection Plans (CPPs) has fallen during Q2. At the end of the quarter, there were 45.3 CPPs per 10,000 U18s, falling from a peak of 55 at the end of 2018/19.

Shropshire is now in line with the national average CPP rate (45.3), though remains higher than the SN rate (38.9).

Data suggests that fewer children are starting CPPs, and more are ceasing, leading to the decrease.

- 7.3 Of the active CPPs at the reporting date, 53% have neglect listed as their primary category of abuse. 38% have emotional abuse, 7% sexual abuse and 2% physical abuse.

Shropshire differs slightly from the national averages, which are: neglect 48.2%, emotional abuse 38.3%, 4% sexual abuse and 6.7% physical abuse. Some authorities also report against multiple categories, nationally this is reported at 2.8%.

- 7.4 At Q2, 13% of CPPs starting during the year were for children who had had a previous plan at any point. This is lower than 18/19 year-end figure of 21%. It's also lower than the national average (20.2%) and the SN average (23%).

- 7.5 Child protections plans that are open for over 2 years can be an indication of drift in casework. Benchmarking for this measure compares the proportion of ceasing CPPs that had been open for 2 years or longer.

At the end of Q2 in Shropshire, 2.1% of CPPs ceasing CPPs had been open for two years or longer. This is lower than the year end 2018/19 position of 7%, and below the SN average (2.58%). Shropshire remains slightly above the national average (1.8%).

2.2% of active CPP cases had been open for 2 years or longer at the end of Q2.

- 7.6 A child in need (CiN) is one that has been assessed by social care to be in need of a service. The rate of CiN in Shropshire fell slightly during Q2 to 273.1 per 10,000

U18s. The chart in Appendix A illustrates the significant increase seen in the CiN rate between 17/18 and 18/19 and a subsequent period of stability at the new, higher level.

Despite the increases, Shropshire's rate remains below that of its SN group (293.96) and the England average (341).

8. Looked After Children, Placements and Care Leavers

- 8.1 The age profile of Shropshire's current looked after children (as at 5/11/19) shows that 58% are age 10 or over. This is contrasted with the age range of only those children who became looked after during 19/20 so far. Here, the highest proportion (58%) of children are between 0 and 9.

Slightly more of Shropshire's current looked after children are male (52%) than female (48%).

- 8.2 Fostering placements make up the highest proportion of looked after placements in Shropshire, with 69.2% of children placed with foster carers. 15.1% of children are placed in homes/hostels and 7.1% are placed with their parents. 2.7% of Shropshire's looked after children are placed for adoption.

- 8.3 Most looked after children in Shropshire (85%) are subject to a court order, which are usually sought by a local authority in respect of children who they believe are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.

64% are subject to a full care order, 18% subject to an interim care order, and 3% subject to a placement order.

The remaining 15% are looked after under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989, which means that the parents have agreed for their child to live elsewhere for a period, either to provide time to make changes in their circumstances or to facilitate further investigation.

- 8.4 The remainder of this report discusses performance relating to care leavers. Benchmarking for care leavers is a new development and focuses only on those young people whose 19th, 20th or 21st birthday in the reporting period. For Q2, this means that only those young people having their birthdays between April and September are included in the cohort.

- 8.5 For care leavers aged 18 to 20, there is a proactive duty on the local authority to keep in touch. Shropshire Council is in touch with 96.3% of all care leavers in this cohort as at Q2. This is slightly higher than the national average (93%).

- 8.6 85.2% of the care leavers in the reporting cohort are living in suitable accommodation, which can include independent living, supported accommodation or living with parents. The national average for this measure is 84%.

- 8.7 53.7% of care leavers in the reporting cohort are in education, employment or training. This is higher than the national average of 51%.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

None.

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Ed Potter, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Local Member

All

Conflicts of interest declared by members

Appendices

A. Q2 19/20 performance dashboard