

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	25 th September 2017
Report of:	Jacquie Sims, Head of Service, Children in Need & Child Protection
Subject/Title:	2016-17 Annual Report of Member Frontline Visits
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr George Hayes

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update to Committee on the themes and issues raised through member frontline visits to the Child in Need and Child Protection Teams.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report.
- 2.2 Members to receive six monthly reports going forward on the previous month's visits and response.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 It is important for Members to have an overview of issues affecting frontline Social Work Teams.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 None.

7.0 Implications for Rural Communities

- 7.1 None.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 There continues to be a pressure on frontline social work teams as a result of the increase in consultations and referrals locally, that reflects the national picture. The financial implications of this have been reported separately.

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 None identified.

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 If frontline social work teams are not staffed and equipped to deal with the demand on their services, there is a risk of death or serious harm to children and young people that are not effectively safeguarded.

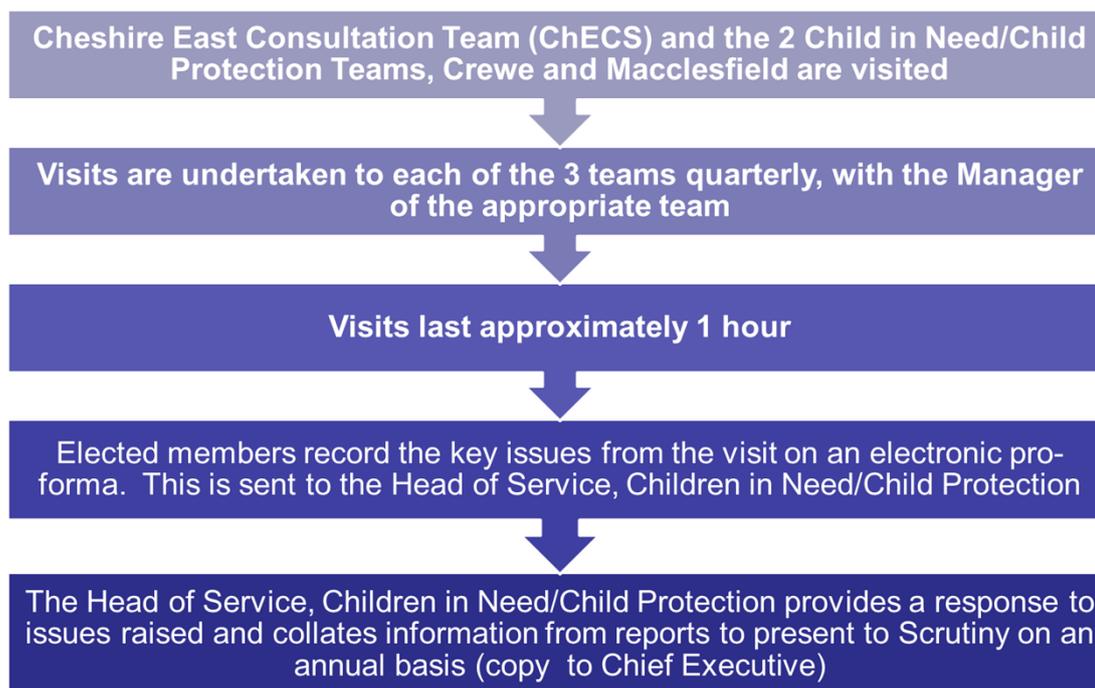
11.0 Background and Options

11.1 Lord Lamings Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié resulted in a range of recommendations. One of these (Social Care Recommendation 41) states that:

"Arrangements must be made for senior managers and councillors to regularly visit intake teams in the Childrens services department and to report their findings to the Chief Executive and Social Services Committee" (para 5. 193)

11.2 This recommendation remains 'best practice' and still considered as part of any Ofsted Inspection. In Cheshire East it has been agreed that the Cheshire East Consultation Team (ChECS) and the two Child in Need / Child Protection Teams Crewe and Macclesfield will be deemed 'intake teams' for these purposes as they are the teams dealing with new referrals.

11.3 A number of elected members have been trained to carry out visits to frontline teams. A rota of these members is drawn up a year in advance and scheduled in with the teams. The current process is as follows:



11.3 During their visits Members meet with Managers and team members (as available) to discuss the following:

- Staffing situation (vacancies/experience/skills/attendance levels)
- Workloads and performance monitoring (outcomes for children)
- Referral, monitoring and management systems
- Staff support systems, eg IT, office accommodation, communication

11.4 The template completed by members is attached at Appendix 1. The following visits took place in 2016-17. Meetings did not take place in November and December 2016 due to sickness.

2016			
April	27th	ChECS	Jos Saunders & Janet Jackson
May	27th	Crewe	Gill Merry & Rhoda Bailey, Jill Rhodes
June	05.07.16	Macc	Lesley Smetham & Laura Jeuda (moved to 05.07.16)
July	14th	ChECS	Rhoda Bailey & Gill Merry
August	11th	Crewe	Laura Jeuda & Jill Rhodes
September	20th	Macc	Rhoda Bailey
October	14th	ChECS	Gill Merry
2017			
January	18th	Crewe	Jill Rhodes
February	15th	Macc	Jos Saunders & Steven Edgar
March	15th	ChECS	Lesley Smetham

11.5 The rota for future meetings is attached at Appendix 2.

12.0 Issues and Head of Service Response

12.1 A summary of the issues raised by frontline teams are set out at Appendix 3, along with a response from the Head of Service.

13.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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ELECTED MEMBERS SAFEGUARDING VISITS TO FRONTLINE CHILD CARE TEAMS

Lord Lamings Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié resulted in a range of recommendations. One of these (Social Care Recommendation 41) states that

"Arrangements must be made for senior managers and councillors to regularly visit intake teams in the children's services department and to report their findings to the Chief Executive and Social Services Committee" (para 5. 193)

Local Procedure

1. Within Cheshire East it has been agreed that the Cheshire East Consultation Team (ChECS) and the two Child in Need / Child Protection Teams Crewe and Macclesfield will be deemed 'intake teams' for these purposes as they are the teams dealing with new referrals.
2. Visits will be undertaken to each team quarterly, with the Group Manager of the appropriate team.
3. Visits will last approximately 1 hour and consist of: -
 - i) Discussion with Service Managers (s) / Team Manager (s)
 - ii) Discussion with team members (as available)

Within the above discussions the following issues will be considered:-

- iii) Staffing situation (vacancies/experience/skills/attendance levels)
 - iv) Workloads and performance monitoring (Outcomes for children)
 - v) Referral monitoring and management systems
 - vi) Staff support systems, eg IT, office accommodation, communication
4. Elected members will record the key issues from the visit on the attached electronic proforma and send to the Head of Service, Children in Need and Child Protection who will provide a response to issues raised.
5. The Local Safeguarding Children Board/Head of Service, Children in Need / Child Protection will collate the information from these reports and present them to Scrutiny on a 6 monthly basis (copy to Chief Executive).



ELECTED MEMBER SAFEGUARDING VISITS TO CHILDREN'S FRONTLINE TEAMS

1	DETAILS OF VISIT
	<p>Team Name: ChECs/CIN/CIP</p> <p>Team Location :</p> <p>Service Managers:</p> <p>Visit Completed by:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Accompanied by:</p>

2	Details of Staff involved in visit
	<p>People spoken with: - Managers:</p>

3	Areas Discussed during visit and issues arising

i)	Workload issues/Performance
ii)	Referral monitoring & Management Systems:
iii)	Staffing Issues (Experience/Skills/Attendance levels):
iv)	Staff Support issues (e.g. IT, office environment, communication)
v)	Any Other Issues:

Signature of Elected Member :

Date:

4	Response of Head of Service – Child in Need & Child Protection Manager

Signature Head of Service, Child in Need & Child Protection:

Date:

Please forward the completed form to Jacquie Sims, Head of Service – Child in Need/Child Protection Jacquie.sims@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Rota for Future Visits

2017			
September	13th	ChECS	Rhoda Bailey & Laura Jeuda
October	16th	Crewe	Steven Edgar & George Hayes
November	15th	Macc	Jill Rhodes & Paul Bates
December	13th	ChECS	Jos Saunders & George Hayes
2018			
January		Crewe	Jill Rhodes & George Hayes
February		Macc	Jos Saunders & Steven Edgar
March		ChECS	Lesley Smetham & Paul Bates
April		Crewe	Rhoda Bailey & Gill Merry
May		Macc	Laura Jeuda & George Hayes
June		ChECS	Jill Rhodes & Steven Edgar
July		Crewe	Jos Saunders & Paul Bates
August		Macc	Lesley Smetham & Gill Merry
September		ChECS	Rhoda Bailey & Laura Jeuda

SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND HEAD OF SERVICE RESPONSE

Team	What staff said	Head of Service Response
CHECS	<p>Workload issues/Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major workload issues over the year • No concerns re caseloads. • Staff talked about some sickness early on in the year • Limited use of agency staff • Some concern expressed around timeliness in dealing with cases earlier in the year. 	<p>The review of ChECS was completed and a redesign of the front door has taken place. The service has recruited to vacant positions with staff due to commence in the new roles in September 2017.</p> <p>In terms of performance, there has been some impact over the last quarter due to staff vacancies, however, more recently timeliness for processing referrals through to Children's Social Care and through to the Early Help Brokerage Service have improved.</p>
	<p>Referral monitoring & Management Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff felt that the Family Information Service (FIS) were effective in filtering calls appropriately. • Felt that ChECS was sometimes being used as a default system when the issue could have been dealt with by the contacting agency/organisation. • Staff felt that a new system, introduced in January 2017, had impacted on performance; there is now more management oversight into ChECS as information can be seen sooner by managers and there is evidence of clear management decisions, resulting in support. • Team feels that it can sometimes be waiting for information from other agencies, including schools, in order to process cases. • Team felt that sometimes parents with home educated children are not engaged. • Staff reported an improvement in the number of CAFs instigated. 	<p>The team has now moved to Delamere House in Crewe and this has addressed the issues around the office environment. This has also resolved some of the IT issues as there is sufficient server capacity in the new office accommodation.</p> <p>As part of the redesign of the front door, multi-agency representation at the front door has been improved, including health, housing, police, the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) team and the Domestic Abuse hub. There has also been some input from Adult Social Care.</p> <p>The Health representative has now been sitting in the front door for over 6 months and is making a valuable contribution through timely provision of health information to inform referrals to children's social care and 360 assessments in early help. Work is taking place to secure this resource on a permanent basis. Currently 2.5 days are confirmed. The next step is also to extend the multi-agency input to make sure we are working together in a more integrated way.</p> <p>The development of a demand management strategy is intended to address the need for partner agencies to own referrals and to manage cases at the right level of need. The levels of need document has been reviewed and will be the focus of a session with the LSCB in September. This is</p>

	<p>Staffing Issues (Experience/Skills/Attendance levels)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of staff is good. • Ideally team would like to see a core team of practitioners who would do the lower level CAFs - would then use existing staff to carry out more complex CAFs. • Team would benefit from further multi-agency involvement, including an education worker based within the team. This person would be able to pick up the home educated children and those at risk of CSE. • The team reported some problems in terms of health information. They felt a Health Safeguarding Practitioner at the front door would help in gaining information about children earlier to avoid delays. Would also like health partners to input information into liquid logic which would then mean that CHECS could make more meaningful decisions. The Domestic Abuse Hub is piloting a study which includes Health inputting data into liquid logic. 	<p>linked to the launch of the multi-agency Early Help Strategy that sets out a number of ways to improve early help for families to prevent the need for specialist services at a later date. The service now has an additional resource to support partner agencies in leading on CAFs and there is an increased number of CAFs being led by other agencies.</p> <p>The Early Help module of liquid logic has been implemented - this integrates CAF with Liquid Logic, so social workers will be able to see if there is a CAF in place or who is working with a family, ultimately professionals will be able to enter the CAF straight into the system, via a 'Professionals' Portal. The professional portal is currently being piloted with plans to roll out more widely later this year.</p> <p>The service trialled a new performance system for prioritising referrals which has led to better management oversight on cases. This has been further refined to reduce the time it was taking to do this and the system is now working much better.</p>
	<p>Staff Support issues (e.g. IT, office environment, communication)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liquid Logic much improved from previous system, but still lots of issues, possibly due to high usage, particularly early in the year. • Some issues re the layout of the building in terms of the site of the teams for ChECS base in Sandbach • Proposals in place for restructuring in terms of staffing and relocation from the building. 	<p>The service is doing lots of work with other agencies to improve processes, including the police around improving the quality of vulnerable person assessments (VPAs), to make sure that thresholds are right and to reduce duplication with the Domestic Abuse Hub.</p> <p>The services has reviewed the introduction of the new telephony system but have delayed introducing a call being directed straight to social worker without initial screening due to the high number of inappropriate calls still being received within ChECS. There has been a reduction over the last few</p>

	<p>Other Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One visit spoke with police rep on the team - extremely informative and helpful, describing the process from the police's view. • Process carried out within the team can save time, offering instant attention compared with the old system of form completion which delayed paperwork getting to social workers. • Reported that the number of live cases has significantly reduced due to new process. Decisions can be taken for low level incident processing. • Bottle necks are no longer occurring due to completion of form that are disseminated and assessed by others who look at the history and risk by accessing records and distribute accordingly. 	<p>months and work remains ongoing in this area.</p>
<p>CIN/CP CREWE</p>	<p>Workload issues/Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team members felt that Cheshire East was well resourced and that staff morale was high. • Team member commented on clear processes, good support and the opportunity to be creative. • Some members felt that had been some impact as Service Manager was on long term sick leave for some of the year. • In August 2016 average caseload was considered high, but had reduced to an average of 12-15 cases by January 2017. Though it was felt that they were more complex cases and require more time and skill. • There was close cooperation between the teams and management were approachable. One team member felt his Manager was very supportive and he felt valued and supported. Supervision was good. • ASYE appreciated the opportunity to work with a more experienced worker on five complex child protection cases. • Positives and negatives to the PODS systems; one team member felt that they could be quite isolating. She felt that a 'Pod Shuffle' 	<p>A decision was made not to increase to 6 pods and so there remain 5 teams in Crewe CIN/CP. This was due to the reduction in the number of open cases that took place through 2016-17, which was in part due to the positive impact of Project Crewe. This remains under review as the number of cases that can be stepped across to FACT 22 has reduced and the complexity of cases open to CIN/CP has increased with significantly more care proceedings.</p> <p>An increase in the number of social workers within the teams has led to an increase the number of desks required within the team room. Crewe CIN/CP has been reorganised and additional desks provided. This means that all social workers can sit within their own teams. Fact 22 (formerly Project Crewe) are also co-located with the team. This has led to improvements in communication and joint working.</p> <p>Over the last 12 months the stability of our teams within Crewe CIN/CP has continued to improve. We now have grade 9 social workers in each of the teams and are growing</p>

	<p>could create different working styles. Plans to increase from five to six pods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some posts were being covered by agency staff. Some of the vacancies are the result of staff moving to different posts but within Cheshire East. By January 2017 there were 9 agency staff, but this was due to reduce as there were some permanent staff due to start. • 9 students were due to join the team early in 2017, so the policy of “growing our own” social workers seems to be working. 	<p>the number of Advanced Practitioners with the aim of an Advanced Practitioner within each team within 12 months.</p> <p>We continue to focus relentlessly on our recruitment and retention of social workers and were finalists in the national Children & Young People Now awards for recruitment and professional development. A number of new staff have taken up positions over the year and are settling in well.</p>
	<p>Referral monitoring & Management Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All referrals to the service are screened by ChECS before being passed to the team. Discussion takes place between the teams, on average 50+ referrals for a child protection assessment every week. • Performance clinics are held fortnightly with Service Managers. Performance is considered good and comparable standard with statistical neighbours. • Staff have dedicated admin time, regular team meetings and monitoring. 	<p>We continue to attract a small number of experienced social workers to Crewe CIN/CP and also have an increasing number of social workers that we have developed from newly qualified through to Grade 9.</p> <p>The recruitment of social workers in Crewe CIN/CP continues to improve and we have reduced the number of agency social workers in the team. We have also permanently recruited to the 5 team manager positions and the fifth Team Manager joined us in March 2017.</p>
	<p>Staffing Issues (Experience/Skills/Attendance levels)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered good level of experience in the team. • Staff retention is better and staff are progressing on to Grade 9 and 10. There are the required numbers of Social Workers for 5 Pods. • LA proposing social worker grade 10 progression and designation to more supervisory. There are two grade 10s and two grade 9s. • Some sick leave, but staff levels are adequate. One social worker who was on long term sick leave due back at end of March 2017. • A freeze on posts due to consultation. • Social workers only move on to grades 9 and 10 after meeting strict performance criteria. A scheme is being developed to allow Grade 10 social workers to further develop their skills and to assist newer colleagues. 	<p>Within the last quarter there has been an increase in caseloads within Crewe CIN/CP. We are monitoring this closely and currently undertaking work within the front door and with partner agencies to look at thresholds and re-referrals.</p> <p>We are currently looking at a workload demand strategy due to the increasing number of referrals we have been experiencing. Caseloads of individual social workers are scrutinised in our monthly performance challenge meetings and team managers will work with individual social workers to support them to manage their caseload where numbers have increased. In response to the increasing demand funding has been made available to increase the establishment of social workers which will have a positive impact on caseloads.</p> <p>It is positive staff report good morale. Our Practice and</p>

	<p>Staff Support issues (e.g. IT, office environment, communication)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel time and congestion around Crewe are still issues but the current workers are happy with their travel times. • The team felt they needed more desks and the shortage of meeting rooms creates problems. It was flagged with building support, who were looking at options, but no firm solution. Issue with meeting rooms reported to be resolved towards the end of the year. • It was felt that hot desking does not work for Social workers and leads to the workers wasting valuable time. • Was felt that if a 6th Pod is created this will make the problem worse. Urgent action is needed to find a solution. • It was felt that the Liquid Logic system was good but could be improved and that the Signs of Safety model would be a good way forward. 	<p>Performance Workshops for social workers now have a significant part dedicated to celebrating good practice and the progress that we are making.</p>
	<p>Any Other Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recent staff survey said that staff want to feel valued. • Recruitment has been difficult with a disappointing response to recent adverts with only two of eighteen applicants being interviewed for vacant posts. Golden Hellos' have been offered. • A number of the staff were newly qualified - 5 ASYEs due to qualify. • Permanent social workers due to start. 	
<p>CIN/CP MACC</p>	<p>Workload issues/Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff felt it would be helpful to have more experienced social workers as a number of the team are newly qualified/ASYE. • Increase in workload over the year means newly qualified and ASYE social workers having a heavier caseload than was desirable. 	<p>Macclesfield CIN/CP continues to have a number of newly qualified social workers at ASYE stage, however there has also been a welcome increase in the number of more experienced social workers. This is a combination of new recruits from neighbouring local authorities and the development and retention of our own social workers. There are no current vacancies within the Macclesfield CIN/CP team, however there have been a number of social workers who have been on maternity leave. This has had some impact on the continuity of social worker for children and young people. Similar to Crewe CIN/CP the aim is to have an Advanced Practitioner within each team over the next 12</p>

	<p>Referral monitoring & Management Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social worker spoken to felt that a return to duty teams would make for more efficient working as that system, in her experience, produced more timely assessments. • The type of cases being referred was felt to be at too high a level and, once referred, the team had to do an assessment; they did not feel they had the freedom to step down cases they thought appropriate. • The service manager thought that having early help at the front door service would help to channel cases more accurately, and an 'early warning' system to inform the teams what was on its way to them, ie to the Early Help brokerage and the Permanence and Throughcare Team, would be helpful. 	<p>months. There are currently two based in Macclesfield CIN/CP.</p> <p>Many of the developments mentioned above re Crewe apply to the Macclesfield area, including the demand management strategy, early help and review of levels of need.</p> <p>We have responded to concerns within the team re duty teams; the process has been reviewed and now teams are on duty for a day, not a week, which removes some of the issues around 'peak' weeks. This seems to be working well.</p> <p>Travel is more of an issue for Macclesfield staff as this office covers a large geographical area. We are encouraging flexible and mobile working and video conferencing, where possible, to address this.</p> <p>In terms of IT, there are still issues around the timely provision of lap tops and phones for staff on occasions and this has been flagged with ICT. The Safeguarding Unit is currently piloting the use of IPADs with young people and, subject to the evaluation of this pilot, this is something that we will look for future service development.</p>
	<p>Staffing Issues (Experience/Skills/Attendance levels)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social workers said they felt well supported. • The distances they had to travel could be very time-consuming, and one wondered if the possibility of satellite offices, eg Congleton, might be raised again. 	
	<p>Staff Support issues (e.g. IT, office environment, communication)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology – it was said that it would be helpful if technology could be available that can be used while the social workers are out and about, eg Ipads or Notebooks, so that they can update records immediately. This would help to speed up the system, as sufficient time to record can be an issue. 	