

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 23 November 2020

Report Title: Performance Update – Quarter 2 2020-21

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kathryn Flavell – Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe – Executive Director of People

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the impact of Covid-19 on performance and gives an overview of performance across the Children and Families service for quarter 2 of 2020-21.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
 - 2.1.1. Note the performance of Children's Services for quarter 2.
 - 2.1.2. Provide support and challenge in relation to performance for children and young people.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. One of the key areas of focus for the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to highlight areas of poor performance and to scrutinise the effectiveness of plans in place to improve services. Overview and Scrutiny has an important role to play in the performance management systems of the local authority.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable.

5. Background

- 5.1. This quarterly report provides the Committee with an overview of performance across Children's Services. This report relates to quarter 2 of 2020-21 (1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020).
- 5.2. It also sets out the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on performance and the arrangements that have been in place during this time. As a result of the pandemic, the ability to deliver the standard Children and Families scorecard and indicators has been heavily impacted for a number of reasons including:
- Contacts and referrals to the front door have shown some unusual trends due to school closures which makes quarter on quarter analysis more complex.
 - Delivery of frontline services, especially in terms of face to face visiting and routine reviews, have been adapted to reflect the various isolation requirements to protect both workers and the families we work with.
 - School attendance data in the previous reportable format was suspended due to school closures and continues to be collected in a different way following re-opening in September.
 - Attendance at Childrens Centres and Youth Support work been has severely impacted in the previously reportable format.
 - Work around Education and Health Care (EHC) Plans – especially when assessing children in their “school environment” and “routine” has been increasingly complex and difficult.
- 5.3 However, senior leaders and managers have remained sighted on service performance and impact on children and young people through the following:
- A weekly core data set provided to CEMART which includes key measures for Children's Services.
 - A weekly social care and safeguarding data set from the beginning of February 2020 comparing core data sets with the same week in 2019/20.
 - Weekly attendance at early years settings Department for Education (DfE) dashboard.
 - Northwest regional core social care data set submitted on a weekly basis on a Monday with a dashboard available for summary
 - National local authority data set submitted to the DfE on a fortnightly basis commencing in May 2020
 - Daily dashboard data around school attendance with weekly national comparator data and summary

- More recently a National SEND local authority data set submitted to the DfE.

5.4 This report contains the indicator set and summary commentary around any areas of concern together with highlighting any different provision/ support that has been put in place during this time.

Children's Social Care

Measure	Year end 2019/20	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 2 2020/21	Quarter 2 2019/20
Number of referrals	2546	539	677	732
Percentage of repeat referrals	16%	18%	14%	14%
Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days	86%	77%	67%	85%
Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection (CP) plan (rolling yr)	21.7%	21%	25%	23%
Number of children in need	1689	1830	1935	1837
Number of children with a child protection plan	253	274	259	230
% of children on CP plans reviewed within	89.6%	100%	99%	93%
Number of cared for children	534	544	537	517
% of cared for children reviewed within timescales	88%	99%	98%	93%
% of cared for children in internal foster care (including friends and family placements)	37%	30%	30%	37%
% of children living in external foster homes	28%	28%	27%	28%
% of children living in residential homes	8%	7%	7%	8%
% of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	29%	29%	28%	27%
% of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	55%	48%	45%	44%
% of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation	95%	97%	96%	97%
Total number of children with a court endorsed plan of adoption (snapshot figure)	38	53	54	32
Number of children adopted (YTD)	17	0	2	10
Average caseload of social workers	25	24	25	22

5.5 Compared to quarter 2 (Q2) last year we are approximately 7.5% down on referrals to the front door albeit we have seen a 26% rise compared to Q1. This is in part due to the opening of schools in July and September with their percentage of referrals represented at 10% in Q2 compared to 14% for the same period last year. Whilst lower than last year, the conversion rate from contact to referral has risen from 25% in Q1 to 31% in Q2, suggesting that services continue to recognise safeguarding issues and refer in despite the change in circumstances.

5.6 The re-referral rate continues to remain at lower levels which, potentially, is a positive indication that the families we have previously worked with are managing sustained positive change throughout this period. Equally

though we are conscious that as schools have been closed there may be need that hasn't been as visible to services which may emerge as schools continue to operate.

- 5.7 Q2 and the relaxation of some of the tighter contact measures has enabled more direct visits to homes, together with some Child Protection conferences taking place face to face within the offices. Virtual visit case note options were added to the electronic recording system part way through Q2 to enable a better understanding of the nature of contact. Having the flexibility to undertake visits and contacts both face to face and virtually has benefited a number of families and young people and offered more bespoke and innovative ways to interact. Optimising technology will remain a feature moving forward.
- 5.8 The percentage of repeat child protection plans remains higher than desired and this is closely scrutinised at performance sessions and through audit to understand reasons for re-escalation. Positively, the percentage that have had a repeat plan within two years is less than 10% suggesting that more recent practice is resulting in sustained change within families.
- 5.9 Delays in care proceedings and additional financial support for foster carers continue to have an adverse impact both in terms of achieving timely permanency for children and also budget implications. Positively we have now had two children adopted together with children successfully transitioning to their next destination, planned returns home and placement with prospective adopters.
- 5.10 More recently we have also identified pressures as a result of adjournments in crown court proceedings. Whilst fortunately very rare for our young people, a recent delay of around 4 months for a young person remaining on remand as a cared for child will mean additional pressures and uncertainty for the wellbeing of the individual. From a financial perspective this will result in overall costs in the region of £88k to support this one individual. Alongside our colleagues in Youth Justice this has been escalated.

Education and Skills

Measure	Year end 2019/20	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 2 2020/21	Quarter 2 2019/20
Percentage good or outstanding primary schools	92%	Not available	Not available	92%
Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools	80%	Not available	Not available	80%
Percentage good or outstanding special schools	80%	Not available	Not available	80%
Percentage attendance for primary pupils year to date	Not available	Not available	Not available	96%
Percentage attendance for secondary pupils year to date	Not available	Not available	Not available	93%
Percentage attendance for special school pupils year to date	Not available	Not available	Not available	90%
Number of permanent exclusions from Cheshire East Schools (latest half term available)	Not available	Not available	Not available	10
Current Number of pupils educated at home	392	345	351	372
Current number of children missing from education.	45	25	98	59
Percentage of Good/ Outstanding PEPs	87%	76%	Not available	2424
Total number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)	2533	2722	2827	2424
% of requests for Educational Psychologists (EP) advice completed within 6 weeks	43%	27%	42%	56%
Special Educational Needs – Education, Health and Care Plans completion within 20 weeks including exceptions (cumulative yr)	42%	38%	34%	46%
Average number of weeks for EHC Plans to be issued (snap shot at quarter end to which it relates)	21.6	23.5	24.4	15.8
% EHCP annual review completed in timescales	72%	65%	63%	70%

- 5.11 At the start of lockdown the DfE announced the cessation of all inspections and as such there is no updated data available. This remains the same for Q2 which also includes the summer break.
- 5.12 Likewise, comparable percentage attendance data sets will not be available as a differing mechanism for reporting attendance at school has been in place since the end of March 2020.
- 5.13 At the end of September, Cheshire East compared favourably in terms of overall pupil attendance at fully and partially opened schools. Whilst

nationally attendance was reported at 89% and regionally at 85%, Cheshire East were reporting 92% attendance.

- 5.14 There are a small number of schools that are unable to report currently to the DfE and the schools team remains in close contact with them to ensure that pupils are attending and any additional support required identified.
- 5.15 Pleasingly, the number of electively home educated (EHE) children has reduced compared to the same period last year. Work remains ongoing with families to ensure they understand the implications and consequences of making the choice to electively home education and to enable where appropriate a move back to a school/ settings placement.
- 5.16 Although there is an increase in the number of children reported missing from education this is not an immediate cause for concern. Most of these are where, due to delays in schools opening or being partially opened, it has taken longer to establish where pupils have moved to specifically around the reception and year 7 cohort. The team is working closely with the families and schools concerned to establish where individuals have enrolled.
- 5.17 At the end of September overall 87% of children and young people with an EHC plan were reported to be attending school. Crucially at the primary school age this was 93%. For those not attending, the teams clearly understood the reasons why and additional support was being provided.
- 5.18 Likewise, overall there was almost 90% of children with a social worker reported as attending the schools in Cheshire East during the last week of September. At the primary school level this was around 97%. This provides additional comfort that our most vulnerable children are now being regularly seen by a range of professionals.
- 5.19 Whilst there has been a small drop in the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans being completed this is due to a significant increase in needs assessment requests received and challenges in undertaking assessments during lockdown and phased reopening of schools. The priority had been to ensure that those moving settings have had the appropriate plans in place despite the very difficult circumstances of not being able to assess individuals for a number of months in a classroom setting. The work to increase the availability of Educational Psychologists (EP) has resulted in substantially increased percentage of requests for

advice being completed in 6 weeks. Given the pressures facing services and the difficulties they are facing these improvements are impressive.

Prevention and Early Help

Measure	Year end 2019/20	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 2 2020/21	Quarter 2 2019/20
Current number of open Early Help Assessments/ plans	1100	1070	1142	1106
% of all open Early Help Assessments led by Cheshire East Prevention service staff	61%	61%	64%	75%
% 0-2 yrs engaged at children centres (most vulnerable i.e. CIN/CP/LAC that have attended 3 or more times in the last 12 months)	28%	Not available	24%	25%
% eligible children taking up 2 year old offer (termly figure only)	79%	Not available	75%	68%
% children taking up 3 and 4 year old offer (termly figure only)	97%-98%	Not available	95%	97%-99%
Number of Families meeting the family focus criteria where outcomes have been successfully concluded (quarterly fig)	700 in yr (1900 target met)	80	81	158 (1540 cumulative)
Number of young people accessing the youth support service	1,228	Not available	1,266	1,464
Number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	199	210	90	105
% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	2.8%	2.9%	1.2%	1.5%

- 5.20 Once again a number of the core indicators normally provided are unavailable due to schools and settings closing, together with some regular activities being provided by Children Centres and Youth Support being required to cancel. The offer may not have been the same as pre-Covid but a number of key activities have continued or started including contacting all families open to social care with an under two year old, contacting all new parents, delivering garden, home and virtual video visits and undertaking the summer activity programme in outdoor spaces across the full age range.

- 5.21 Throughout Q2 the detached targeted youth work in conjunction with PCSO's and other partner agencies has continued across the borough. The teams were out over 19 evenings in July alone, often visiting as many as 4 or 5 different locations each evening. Most evenings this resulted in engagement with 20-30 individuals over locations rising to as many as 150 in one evening.
- 5.22 Despite the difficulties services are facing, compared to the same point last year we are supporting more families and young people with an early help assessment. This means that individuals are getting support as soon as possible and we can target help and equip individuals with tools and techniques before issues escalate. Longer term this will hopefully contribute to reduced numbers of individuals requiring specialist interventions and services.
- 5.23 The number of assessments being lead by Cheshire East Prevention Services is also lower than the same point last year. This means that our partners are increasingly taking the lead when they are the most appropriate agency. Given the pressures that all the agencies are facing currently the importance of this should not be underestimated.
- 5.24 A programme of preventative summer activities was provided between 21st July – 27th August with sessions for up to 18 individuals (in line with agreed Government guidelines) available across all three localities. This included the development of a virtual parenting journey and the "50 things to do before you're 5" which had over 1700 hits. In total 368 children plus parents accessed activities.
- 5.25 Overall due to the extensive range of activities, detached work and individual sessions, 1,266 individuals accessed youth support services. Given the restrictions imposed this is extremely impressive and a testament to the innovation and flexibility of the service.
- 5.26 546 households where babies had been born in April and May were visited and provided with a Book Start Baby pack and the opportunity to register at their local Childrens Centre. Other events such weekly Buggy walks attracted 67 parents and children.
- 5.27 The Family Focus work has continued following a further 12 month extension to the programme with a 2020/21 target of 318 payment by results. As at Q2 we are still on target with successful outcomes for 161 families achieved.

- 5.28 The Family Service supported the summer reading challenge with 200 packs delivered and 250 free books provided.
- 5.29 The not in education, employment or training (NEET) figures are currently very low and showing at 1.2%, however we still have a number of individuals where their placement/ status was still to be finalised as at the the end of September.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. There are no direct legal implications.

6.2. Finance Implications

- 6.2.1. Although there are no direct financial implications related to this report, performance measures may be used as an indicator of where more or less funding is needed at a service level.

6.3. Policy Implications

- 6.3.1. There are no direct policy implications.

6.4. Equality Implications

- 6.4.1. Members may want to use the information from the performance indicators to ensure that services are targeted at more vulnerable children and young people.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

- 6.5.1. There are no direct human resource implications.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.6.1. There are risks associated with some performance measures, e.g. increases in demand and timeliness of services.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

- 6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

- 6.8.1. Performance reports enable members to identify areas of good performance and areas for improvement in relation to children and young people, including cared for children.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. This report does not impact on climate change.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. The performance measures relate to all ward areas.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. Not applicable.

9. Access to Information

9.1. There is no additional information.

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Mark Palethorpe

Job Title: Executive Director of People

Email: Mark.Palethorpe@cheshireeast.gov.uk