

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 22 March 2021

Report Title: Performance Update – Quarter 3 2020-21

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

Senior Officer: Ged Rowney – Interim Director of Children's Services

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the impact of Covid-19 on performance, and the arrangements that have been in place during this time, and gives an overview of performance across the Children and Families service for quarter 3 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 3 2020-21.
 - 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 3 (Q3) of 2020-21 (1 October 2020 – 31 December 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 Children's Centres and Youth Support work has been 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 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. This reduced to a monthly return from December 2020 onwards.
 - 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.
- EHCP Power BI reporting platform that enables the service to have timely information on assessment timescales and reviews due enabling the service to prioritise case loads and requirements.
- 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 3 2020/21	Quarter 3 2019/20
Number of referrals	2546	539	677	610	618
Percentage of repeat referrals	16%	18%	14%	13%	18%
Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days	86%	77%	67%	73%	88%
Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection (CP) plan (rolling yr)	21.7%	21%	25%	28%	20%
Number of children in need	1689	1830	1935	1830	1825
Number of children with a child protection plan	253	274	259	271	262
% of children on CP plans reviewed within timescales	89.6%	100%	99%	97%	98%
Number of cared for children	534	544	537	539	521
% of cared for children reviewed within timescales	88%	99%	98%	96%	94%
% of cared for children in internal foster care (including friends and family placements)	37%	30%	30%	33%	36%
% of children living in external foster homes	28%	28%	27%	26%	27%
% of children living in residential homes	8%	7%	7%	7%	8%
% of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	29%	29%	28%	29%	28%
% of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	55%	48%	45%	45%	46%
% of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation	95%	97%	96%	96%	96%
Total number of children with a court endorsed plan of adoption (snapshot figure)	38	53	54	50	36
Number of children adopted (YTD)	17	0	2	6	13
Average caseload of social workers	25	24	25	22	21

5.5 Compared to quarter 3 (Q3) 2019-20 there has been a similar number of referrals to social care this year. This is possibly due to the fact for the early part of Q3 more children were being seen at schools however we have also seen a notable rise throughout the year in referrals being received from midwives and a rise in unborn and babies where there are concerns. In the latter quarter we have also seen a return to similar levels of cases where domestic violence is a feature compared to last year.

- 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.
- 5.7 Despite the tighter restrictions coming in part way through Q3, where possible, visits and child protection conferences were undertaken face to face with the appropriate social distancing protocol being undertaken. The flexibility to operate virtually and undertake virtual visits with the aid of a range of technologies has however continued to be beneficial and in some cases enabled more engagement and keeping in touch with families.
- 5.8 Although there has been increasing pressure on services the percentage of CP conferences reviewed in timescales remains high and for Q3 performance was slightly better than the same quarter in 2019/20.
- 5.9 There has been a positive move with an increasing percentage of cared for children being supported in internal foster care placements and approved family and friends placements. The Mockingbird project has now commenced within the fostering service with the first families engaged and it is hoped the success of this will continue to see this percentage improve.
- 5.10 Quarter 3 has seen some positive movements within the court arena and care proceedings and as such we had six further individuals adopted. This is extremely positive for those individuals involved in terms of security and stability for their future and and we are confident of more in quarter 4.
- 5.11 The average caseloads for social workers has seen a drop which will support workers in improved workload capacity which has been a concern especially during the pandemic. This is due to increased FTE capacity and successful closure of cases as work has yielded positive outcomes. This continues to be closely monitored especially where newly qualified workers are concerned.

Education and Skills

Measure	Year end 2019/20	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 2 2020/21	Quarter 3 2020/21	Quarter 3 2019/20
Percentage good or outstanding primary schools	92%	Not available	Not available	Not available	93%
Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools	80%	Not available	Not available	Not available	80%
Percentage good or outstanding special schools	80%	Not available	Not available	Not available	80%
Percentage attendance for primary pupils year to date	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	96%
Percentage attendance for secondary pupils year to date	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	94%
Percentage attendance for special school pupils year to date	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	91%
Number of permanent exclusions from Cheshire East Schools (latest half term available)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	10
Current Number of pupils educated at home	392	345	351	446	354
Current number of children missing from education.	45	25	98	82	49
Percentage of Good/ Outstanding PEPs	87%	76%	Not available	Not available	87% reported Jan 20)
Total number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)	2533	2722	2827	2932	2468
% of requests for Educational Psychologists (EP) advice completed within 6 weeks	43%	27%	42%	94%	39%
Special Educational Needs – Education, Health and Care Plans completion within 20 weeks including exceptions (cumulative yr)	42%	38%	34%	42%	51%
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	21.3	19.6
% EHCP annual review completed in timescales	72%	65%	63%	76%	75%

5.13 At the start of lockdown the DfE announced the cessation of all inspections and as such there is no updated data available. During quarter 3, Ofsted recommenced interim visits to schools and as at 4 December 2020 (the latest published Ofsted data) Cheshire East had received 8 visits to state funded schools (7 primaries and 1 secondary). Letters outlining these visits have been published to the Ofsted website however no judgements are provided for these visits.

5.14 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. Daily information is available to the directorate monitoring placements requested in schools for vulnerable pupils and key worker children.

- 5.15 Prior to closure for December the vast majority of schools were fully open with overall attendance exceeding the national average.
- 5.16 There are a small number of schools that are unable to report currently to the DfE and the Education service remains in close contact with them to ensure that pupils are attending and any additional support required is identified.
- 5.17 Whilst the number has reduced from quarter 2, work is ongoing with regards to understanding the numbers of individuals missing from education. 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.
- 5.18 At the end of December overall 84% of children and young people with an EHC plan were reported to be attending school. Crucially at the primary school age this was 90%. For those not attending, the teams understood the reasons why and additional support was being provided.
- 5.19 Likewise overall there was around 85% of children with a social worker reported as attending the schools in Cheshire East during the last week of the December half term. At the primary school level this consistently exceeded 90%. This provides additional reassurance that our most vulnerable children and young people are being regularly seen by a range of professionals.
- 5.20 Despite significant issues due to the difficulty in being able to observe pupils in a classroom setting in Q3, we have seen improvement in the timeliness of EHC plans which is a testament to the work of staff and partners to ensure children are being effectively supported. The cumulative year to date figure doesn't highlight the progress made in recent months with the completion rate in November of 59% with a further improvement of 71% for the month of December.
- 5.21 The work to increase the availability of Educational Psychologists (EP) has clearly shown significant progress and in Q3 the percentage of requests for advice being completed in 6 weeks is hugely impressive and speaks for itself.

Prevention and Early Help

Measure	Year end 2019/20	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 2 2020/21	Quarter 3 2020/21	Quarter 3 2019/20
Current number of open Early Help Assessments/ plans	1100	1070	1142	1210	1005
% of all open Early Help Assessments led by Cheshire East Prevention service staff	61%	61%	64%	63%	61%
% 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%	23%	29%
% eligible children taking up 2 year old offer (termly figure only)	79%	Not available	75%	77%	78%
% children taking up 3 and 4 year old offer (termly figure only)	97%-98%	Not available	95%	94%	97%-99%
Number of Families meeting the family focus criteria where outcomes have been successfully concluded (quarterly fig)	1900 target achieved	80	81	83	Not comparable as new targets set
Number of young people accessing the youth support service	1,228	Not available	1,266	736	1,299
Number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	199	210	90	158	169
% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	2.8%	2.9%	1.2%	2.1%	2.4%

- 5.22 Once again a number of the core indicators normally provided are unavailable due to schools and settings closing, and with some regular activities being provided by Children's Centres and Youth Support required to cancel.
- 5.23 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
- 5.24 The take up of the 2, 3 and 4 year old offer remains consistently high ensuring that children are receiving support at the earliest opportunity and crucially enabling their individual progress despite the Covid-19 restrictions. Enabling social interaction and group learning at a young age

is crucial to development and ensuring that this being supported and provided by our teams and partners has remained a priority.

- 5.25 The number of assessments being led by Cheshire East Council's Prevention Service remains at a similar level to last year which means that our partners continue to take 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.
- 5.26 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 Q3 we are still on target with successful outcomes for 244 families achieved.
- 5.27 Despite the difficulties in available employment opportunities, the not in education, employment or training (NEET) figures remain low and actually showing an improved position compared to last year.

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: Ged Rowney

Job Title: Director of Children's Services

Email: Ged.Rowney@cheshireeast.gov.uk