

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	12 July 2021
Report Title:	Children and Families Performance Report Quarter 4 2021-22
Report of:	Ged Rowney, Interim Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/03/21
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Executive 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 4 of 2020-21.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** The Children and Families Committee is asked to:
- 2.2.** Note the performance of children's services for quarter 4.
- 2.3.** 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 Committee is to review performance and scrutinise the effectiveness of services for children and young people.

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 4 of 2020-21 (1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021).

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. Data has been provided for quarter 4 now all schools are open.
- Attendance at Children's Centres and Youth Support work has been severely impacted in the previously reportable format
- Work around Education and Health Care 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 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. This is continuing for at least the first quarter of 2021/22 whilst we assess the impact of lockdown easing.
- Weekly attendance at early years settings Department for Education (DfE) dashboard
- Northwest regional core social care data set submitted initially on a weekly basis, but was reduced to a monthly return from December 2020 onward, with a dashboard available for summary.
- National local authority data set submitted to the DfE – originally on a fortnightly basis commencing in May 2020, but this reduced to monthly in Spring 2021.
- Daily dashboard data around school attendance with weekly national comparator data and summary.
- Education Health and Care Plan (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 on a monthly basis.

- 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	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 2 2020/21	Quarter 3 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Indicative yr end
Number of referrals	539	676	610	467	2292
Percentage of repeat referrals	18%	14%	13%	17%	16%
Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days	77%	67%	73%	74%	72%
Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection (CP) plan (rolling yr)	21%	25%	28%	28%	27.5%
Number of children in need	1830	1935	1830	1713	
Number of children with a child protection plan	274	259	271	244	244
% of children on CP plans reviewed within timescales	100%	99%	97%	93%	98.7%
Number of cared for children	544	537	539	517	517
% of cared for children reviewed within timescales	99%	98%	96%	99%	99.5%
% of cared for children in internal foster care (including friends and family placements)	30%	30%	33%	35%	35%
% of children living in external foster homes	28%	27%	26%	28%	28%
% of children living in residential homes	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%
% of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	29%	28%	29%	28%	28%
% of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	48%	45%	45%	51%	
% of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation	97%	96%	96%	97%	
Total number of children with a court endorsed plan of adoption (snapshot figure)	53	54	50	30	
Number of children adopted (YTD)	0	2	6	26	26
Average caseload of social workers	24	25	22	19	

- 5.5.** Compared to quarter 3 (Q3) there has been a significant reduction in referrals to social care, which is also lower than the numbers seen in Q4 of 2019/20 at 562. This is potentially in part due to schools remaining closed for much of Q4. The overall number of referrals in the 12 months compared to last year is 280 less at 2,266 (2,546 in 19/20) however the number received from Police and Health colleagues comparable with last year. Early analysis shows that the rate of contact to referral actually increased in 20/21 suggesting that safeguarding risks were still being identified and referred appropriately.
- 5.6.** Although the re-referral rate increased in Q4, it still remains at much more acceptable levels and lower than the latest published North West position of 22%. Re-referrals are regularly audited for any recurring themes.
- 5.7.** From the dip in Q2 there has been a focused and steady improvement in the timeliness of assessments, ensuring that risks are being quickly identified and plans put in place for individuals in a timely fashion.
- 5.8.** The rate of repeat child protection plans continues to be a focus for audit and reflective learning, considering reasons for the need for repeat

intervention and what interventions may lead to more permanent solutions for the future.

- 5.9.** Quarter 4 has continued to see positive movements within the court arena and care proceedings resulting in 18 individuals being adopted between January and March and resulting in 26 individuals adopted in 2020/21. This is extremely positive for those individuals involved in terms of security and stability for their future. This is the reason for such a reduction in the overall number of individuals with a current court endorsed adoption plan.
- 5.10.** The average case loads 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 is closely monitored alongside local variations in specific team and area workloads.

Education and Skills

Measure	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 2 2020/21	Quarter 3 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Indicative yr end
Percentage good or outstanding primary schools	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	92%
Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	80%
Percentage good or outstanding special schools	Not available	Not available	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	83%	
Number of permanent exclusions from Cheshire East Schools (latest half term available)	Not available	Not available	Not available	5	14
Current Number of pupils educated at home	345	351	446	457	457
Current number of children missing from education.	25	98	82	62	62
Percentage of Good/ Outstanding PEPs	76%	Not available	Not available	82%	
Total number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)	2722	2827	2932	3013	3013
% of requests for Educational Psychologists (EP) advice completed within 6 weeks	27%	42%	94%	87%	59%
Special Educational Needs – Education, Health and Care Plans completion within 20 weeks including exceptions (cumulative yr - NB Q4 represents new year - see comments)	38%	34%	42%	85%	37%
Average number of weeks for EHC Plans to be issued (snap shot at quarter end to which it relates)	23.5	24.4	21.3	19.0	
% EHCP annual review completed in timescales	65%	63%	76%	67%	67%

- 5.11.** At the start of lockdown the DfE announced the cessation of all inspections and as such there is no updated data available. During quarter 4 Ofsted continued with monitoring visits to schools and in the latest published Ofsted data Cheshire East had received 2 visits to state funded primary schools. Letters outlining these visits have been published on the Ofsted website however no judgements are provided for these visits. Current guidance is that full inspections will recommence in September 2021.
- 5.12.** Percentage attendance data sets are now available since return to school in March 2021. Daily information also remain available to the directorate monitoring COVID information and attendance by vulnerable groups.
- 5.13.** Exclusions data is now also available and the year end data represents all notification since September 2020. All exclusions are at the secondary school level. All potential permanent exclusions are discussed with the Education Access Officer. There have been 30 enquiries relating to primary school exclusions have been successfully prevented and a total of 28 relating to secondary school (half of which have been prevented) Support includes discussions around alternative provision, guidance and referral to Cornerstone.
- 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.** We have experienced an increase in children being educated at home (electively home educated – EHE) however this has been seen across the whole of the North West with some LA's seeing a two fold increase. Reasons are varied with a range of COVID anxieties such as risk of infection and exposure risks for vulnerable family members being a consideration in a number of cases. We implemented a multi-agency pre-deregistration meeting in September 2020, requesting schools to invite child, parents, professionals involved with the child and Local Authority to meet to discuss reasons for de-registration and set our Local Authority expectations, ensuring parents were making an informed choice to EHE. Since September 2020 we have received 303 EHE enquiries to become EHE, and only 154 (50%) children have to date de-registered
- 5.16.** The number of individuals missing from education continues to reduce with ongoing work to resolve the remaining individuals circumstances. 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.** The PEP data represents the position at the end of the Autumn term and is reported on in January 2021. Spring term will be reported on in Q1 2021.

- 5.18.** Although the overall years performance is 59%, the work to increase the availability of Educational Psychologists (EP) now shows sustainable improvement for two quarters with timely advice vastly improved. This ongoing partnership approach will vastly improve outcomes for individuals with robust education plans in place much quicker.
- 5.19.** The year end timeliness for Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans of 37% represents the outturn reported in January as part of the SEN2 statutory return to the DfE. Q4 performance of 85% therefore reflects the position from January – March 2021 and is the first quarter in the reporting year for that service. This much improved position also reflects on the average time for completion down to 19 weeks for new plans in Q4.
- 5.20.** Timely reviews of EHC plans remains a priority however the increasing numbers of plans together with new requests means that the service is under constant pressure to meet all requirements.

Prevention and Early Help

Measure	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 2 2020/21	Quarter 3 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Indicative yr end
Current number of open Early Help Assessments/ plans	1070	1142	1210	1237	1237
% of all open Early Help Assessments led by Cheshire East Prevention service staff	61%	64%	63%	61%	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)	Not available	24%	23%	21%	
% eligible children taking up 2 year old offer (termly figure only)	Not available	75%	77%	68%	
% children taking up 3 and 4 year old offer (termly figure only)	Not available	95%	94%	94%	
Number of Families meeting the family focus criteria where outcomes have been successfully concluded (quarterly fig)	80	81	83	74	318
Number of young people accessing the youth support service	Not available	1,266	736	872	
Number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12- 13]	210	90	158	174	174
% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	2.9%	1.2%	2.1%	2.3%	2.3%

- 5.21.** 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

- 5.22.** Importantly, the number of early help assessments that are led by Cheshire East staff are beginning to reduce as partners are increasingly able to undertake the lead where they are the most appropriate agency. This should hopefully continue to improve as schools settle into a more established and consistent routine again.
- 5.23.** 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.
- 5.24.** 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 Q4 this has been achieved. The programme has been further extended (now known as the Supporting People programme) with a target of a further 332 families being supported.
- 5.25.** Q4 has seen an increase in the number of individuals receiving support from the youth service. This continues to be a blended service of virtual and face to face work. Groups are still operating in smaller numbers observing the appropriate COVID national guidance.
- 5.26.** Despite the difficulties in available employment opportunities, the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) remains low and actually showing an improved position compared to last year.

6. Implications

6.1. Legal

- 6.1.1.** There are no direct legal implications.

6.2. Finance

- 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

- 6.3.1.** There are no direct policy implications.

6.4. Equality

- 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

6.5.1. There are no direct human resource implications.

6.6. Risk Management

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

6.7. Rural Communities

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Children and 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

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10. Climate Change

6.10.1. This report does not impact on climate change.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None