Cheshire East Council

Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting: 6 October 2021

Report Title: Children and Families Performance Report Quarter 1 2021-22

Report of: Ged Rowney, Interim Director of Children's Services

Report Reference No: CF/11/21-22

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 1 of 2020-21.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Children and Families Committee is asked to note the performance of Children's Services for quarter 1.

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 1 of 2021-22 (1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021).

5.2. It also sets out the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on performance, which include:

- Contacts and referrals to the front door showing some unusual trends due to school closures which makes quarter on quarter analysis more complex. This has continued into quarter 1 as bubble arrangements and isolation guidelines have meant that many schools have had signifiant numbers of pupils not attending.
- 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.
- Attendance at Children's Centres and Youth Support, whilst intially impacted during the pandemic, are now being delivered within COVID safe guidelines and face to face services are being delivered with increased numbers attending.
- 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. Senior leaders and managers continue to remain 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.
- 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 prioirtise case loads and requirements.
- 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	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22
Number of referrals	2273	467	601
Percentage of repeat referrals	16%	17%	18%
Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days	74%	74%	79%
Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection (CP) plan (rolling yr)	27.8%	28%	27%
Number of children in need	2082 (Cin census outturn)	1713	1739
Number of children with a child protection plan	236	244	220
% of children on CP plans reviewed within timescales	93.1%	93%	93%
Number of cared for children	518	517	527
% of cared for children reviewed within timescales	96%	99%	96%
% of cared for children in internal foster care (including friends and family placements)	35%	35%	35%
% of children living in external foster homes	28%	28%	22%
% of children living in residential homes	8%	8%	7%
% of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	28%	28%	28%
% of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	48%	51%	47%
% of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation	98%	97%	97%
Total number of children with a court endorsed plan of adoption (snapshot figure)	30	30	30
Number of children adopted (YTD)	26	26	3
Average caseload of social workers	19	19	20

5.5.   Compared to quarter 4 (Q4) there has been a significant increase in referrals to social care, which is also higher than the numbers seen in Q1 of 2020/21 at 539. The main source of the increase is from schools as they are now seeing children in a clasroom enviroment for longer and understanding the impact the COVID pandemic has had on health and wellbeing. Analysis shows that the rate of contact to referral increased in 20/21 suggesting that safeguarding risks were still being identified and referred appropriately and this is remaining in Q1.

5.6.   Although the re-referral rate increased slightly in Q1, 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.   Q1 showed a continued improvement in the timeliness of assessments, ensuring that risks are being quickly identified and plans put in place for individuals in a timely fashion. This however needs to be viewed

alongside quality and management oversight indicates that where needed challenge is being put in place where required.

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. There has been a small increase in the number of children in care from year end albeit numbers remain lower than at the same time last year where we had 544 individuals in the care of the local authority. Positively the numbers in external foster care are lower meaning that more individuals are being supported within a mix of family arrangements.

5.10. Due to the increased number of referrals the average case loads for social workers has seen a small increase. This will continue to be monitored closely alongside local variations in specific team and area workloads.

Education and Skills

Measure	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22
Percentage good or outstanding primary schools	92%	Not available	Not available
Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools	80%	Not available	Not available
Percentage good or outstanding special schools	80%	Not available	Not available
Percentage attendance for primary pupils year to	96%	96%	97%
Percentage attendance for secondary pupils year to date	93%	93%	93%
Percentage attendance for special school pupils year to date	83%	83%	90%
Number of permanent exclusions from Cheshire East Schools (latest half term available)	5	5	6
Current Number of pupils educated at home	457	457	509
Current number of children missing from education.	62	62	58
Percentage of Good/ Outstanding PEPs	82%	82%	89%
Total number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)	3013	3013	3142
% of requests for Educational Psychologists (EP) advice completed within 6 weeks	59%	87%	98%
Special Educational Needs – Education, Health and Care Plans completion within 20 weeks including exceptions (cumulative yr - NB Q4 represents new year - see comments at point 5.19)	37%	85%	86%
Average number of weeks for EHC Plans to be issued (snap shot at quarter end to which it relates)	19.0	19.0	19.4
% EHCP annual review completed in timescales	67%	67%	58%

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 1 Ofsted continued with monitoring visits to schools, and in the latest published Ofsted data Cheshire East had received 3 visits to schools. Letters outlining these visits have been published on the Ofsted

website and whilst no judgements are provided for these visits, all 3 state that leaders are taking effective action to improve. Current gudiance 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 remains available to the directorate monitoring COVID information and attendance by vulnerable groups. Q1 saw an improvement in the attendance at both primary schools and special schools. Additional support has been provided in schools to aid individuals in returning and settling back into the daily routine together with identified educational needs.

5.13. The latest exclusions data reported relates to the term ending in July. All exclusions relate to secondary school exclusions. All schools considering a permanent exclusion liaise directly with education access officer to discuss exclusion and she explores alternatives with the school.

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 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 LAs seeing a two fold increase. Reasons are varied with a range of COVID anxieties such as risk of infection and exposure risks for vulnerable familiy members being a consideration in a number of cases. We implemented a multi-agency pre-deregistration meeting in September 2020, requesting schools to invite the child, parents, professionals involved with the child, and Local Authority, to meet to discuss reasons for de-registration and set our Local Authoritiy expectations, ensuring parents were making an informed choice to electively home educate.

5.16. The number of individuals missing from education contines to reduce with ongoing work to resolve the remaining individuals' circumstances.The team is working closely with the families and schools concerned to establish where individuals have enrolled.

5.17. The personal education plan (PEP) data represents the position at the end of the Spring term. Considerable work has been completed by the Virtual School in conjunction with the relevant schools attended to ensure that all our cared for children have comprehensive support to fulfill their potential.

5.18. The last two quarters' performance demonstrate the success of the work that has been ongoing to increase the availability of Educational Psychologists (EPs). This ongoing partnership approach will continue to 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. Q1 performance of 86% therefore reflects the position from January – June 2021. The average time for completion also remains constant at around 19 weeks for new plans.

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	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22
Current number of open Early Help Assessments/ plans	1237	1237	1243
% of all open Early Help Assessments led by Cheshire East Prevention service staff	61%	61%	58%
% 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)	23%	21%	20%
% eligible children taking up 2 year old offer (termly figure only)	68%	68%	71%
% children taking up 3 and 4 year old offer (termly figure only)	94%	94%	93%
Number of Families meeting the Supporting People (previously family focus) criteria where outcomes have been successfully concluded (quarterly fig)	318 target achieved	74	87
Number of young people accessing the youth support service		872	1634
Number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	174	174	172
% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	2.3%	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 specialst interventions and services.

5.22. The number of early help assessments that are led by Cheshire East staff continues to reduce as partners are increasingly able to undertake the lead where they are the most appropriate agency. This is in part due to schools being fully opened together with other partner agencies opening more face to face services.

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 learing 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 Supporting People Programme (formally Familiy Focus Programme) has continued following a further 12 month extension to the programme with a 2021/22 target of 332 payment by results. As at Q1, 87 families had been succesfully supported indicating that should this continue we will achieve the target set.

5.25. Q1 has seen a significant increase in the number of individuals receiving support from the Youth Service. This is primarily due to being able to open up more of the group sessions within the revised guidelines. Where virtual services have proved successful we will continue to offer a blended approach to maximise the support available.

5.26. Although there are still some difficulties in identifying available employment opportunities, the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) remains low. Part of the local offer for care leavers includes support to apply for apprenticeships, training funding and a range of other opportuities.

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	
Contact Officer:	Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager Bev.Harding@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None