

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	24 March 2022
Report Title:	Children and Families Performance Report Quarter 3 2021-22
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/26/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report gives an overview of performance across Children and Families' services for quarter 3 of 2021-22. It sets out the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on performance, and the arrangements that have been in place during this time.
- 1.2. The directorate has taken on board the feedback from committee with regards to adding in comparator and trend data where available. The scorecard is being reviewed and will be presented in Q4 addressing these comments.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. As above.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Children and Families Committee is asked to:
- 3.2. Note the performance of children's services for quarter 3.
- 3.3. Provide support and challenge in relation to performance for children and young people.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. 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.

5. Other Options Considered

5.1. Not applicable.

6. Background

6.1. This quarterly report provides the committee with an overview of performance across Children's Services. This report relates to quarter 3 of 2021-22 (1 October 2021 – 31 December 2021).

6.2. There still remain some ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and residual isolation/ social distancing guidelines, 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. Quarter 3 figures are traditionally higher than quarter 2 due to a large number of young people starting/ changing schools and the additional anxieties that this can bring.
- 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 initially 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.

6.3. 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 has continued into quarter 3 2021-22.
- 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, reducing to monthly in Spring 2021. This has increased to again to fortnightly from December 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 caseloads and requirements.
- A national SEND local authority dataset submitted to the DfE on a monthly basis.

6.4. This report contains the Children’s services indicators, summary commentary around any areas of concern, and highlights any different provision/ support that has been put in place during this time.

Children’s Social Care

Measure	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22	Quarter 2 2021/22	Quarter 3 2021/22
Number of referrals	2273	601	454	522
Percentage of repeat referrals	16%	18%	15%	12%
Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days	74%	79%	68%	83%
Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection (CP) plan (rolling year)	27.8%	27%	20%	21%
Number of children in need	2082 (CIN census outturn)	1739	1887	1716
Number of children with a child protection (CP) plan	236	220	234	256
% of children on CP plans reviewed within timescales	93.1%	93%	96%	94%
Number of cared for children	518	527	519	528
% of cared for children reviewed within timescales	96%	96%	99%	97%
% of cared for children in internal foster care (including friends and family placements)	35%	35%	34%	37%
% of children living in external foster homes	28%	22%	28%	25%
% of children living in residential homes	8%	7%	6%	6%
% of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	28%	28%	27%	24%
% of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	48%	47%	48%	46%
% of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation	98%	97%	98%	97%
Total number of children with a court endorsed plan of adoption (snapshot figure)	30	30	33	26
Number of children adopted (year to date)	26	3	5	11
Average caseload of social workers	19	20	19	19

- 6.5.** As we would traditionally expect, the referrals for quarter 3 have increased compared to the previous quarter. This is linked to the new school year and a large number of young people starting/ changing schools and the additional anxieties that this can bring. However, overall compared to the North West our rates of referral remain very low which is what we would expect given our demographic profile (latest comparable data is Q2 which has Cheshire East at a rate of 273.1 compared to a NW average of 528.7).
- 6.6.** The re-referral rate in Q3 continues to show a downward trend which is an indicator of sustained change for families we have previously worked with. The year to date performance of 15% is also significantly better than the latest published North West position of 22.2% and national position of 22.7% (based on the 2020-21 released CIN census data). Re-referrals are regularly audited for any recurring themes.
- 6.7.** Q3 also saw a substantial improvement in assessment timeframes which was recognised in the recent Ofsted focused visit as per the extract from the report: *“Timely assessments of children’s needs include careful consideration of family history and children’s experiences to appropriately identify strengths and risks for children. The views and opinions of children, parents and relevant professionals are sought effectively to inform assessment conclusions.”*
- 6.8.** Although there has been a small increase in the number of children and young people in care, our rate remains at the lowest across the North West. The latest comparable data we have across the region is for quarter 2, Cheshire East’s rate was 66.5 per 10,000 (0-17 years) compared to an average for the region of 96.5.
- 6.9.** An increased percentage of our cared for children are living in a family environment with our own approved foster carers including family and friends placements. This will hopefully lead to more stable placements and better outcomes for the young people concerned.
- 6.10.** We have also been able to reduce the number of cared for children having to be placed significant distances from home. Whilst sometimes this is the best decision for a young person, where possible being able to stay at the same school and near existing networks of friends can reduce the levels of uncertainty and upheaval.
- 6.11.** The number of adoptions continue to slowly increase with a further 14 individuals living in their adoption placements.

Education and Skills

Measure	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22	Quarter 2 2021/22	Quarter 3 2021/22
Percentage good or outstanding primary schools	92%	Not available	92%	91%
Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools	80%	Not available	80%	79%
Percentage good or outstanding special schools	60%	Not available	50%	50%
Percentage attendance for primary pupils year to date	96%	97%	Not reported for Sept	94%
Percentage attendance for secondary pupils year to date	93%	93%	Not reported for Sept	91%
Percentage attendance for special school pupils year to date	83%	90%	Not reported for Sept	88%
Number of permanent exclusions from Cheshire East Schools (latest half term available)	5	6	Not reported for Sept	11
Current number of pupils educated at home	457	509	435	457
Current number of children missing from education.	62	58	74	46
Percentage of Good/ Outstanding PEPs (reported termly)	82%	89%	Not reported for Sept	Not reported for Dec
Total number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)	3013	3142	3277	3402
% of requests for Educational Psychologists (EP) advice completed within 6 weeks	59%	98%	89%	86%
Special Educational Needs – Education, Health and Care Plans completion within 20 weeks including exceptions (<i>cumulative year - Note Q4 represents the new year - see comments at point 6.19</i>)	37%	86%	75%	67%
Average number of weeks for EHC Plans to be issued (snapshot at quarter end to which it relates)	19.0	19.4	20.3	20.9
% EHCP annual review completed in timescales	67%	58%	66%	70%

6.12. Although attendance for Q3 is slightly lower it is important to view this alongside the continuing restrictions and issues imposed by the Omicron variant of Covid-19.

6.13. There are a small number of schools that are currently unable to report to the DfE in terms of attendance and the schools team remains in close contact

with them to ensure that pupils are attending and any additional support required is identified.

- 6.14.** Exclusions are slightly increased from the same time last year. Service teams are working with identified schools to seek reasons and solutions where increases have been seen.
- 6.15.** Following the initial increase in the number of children missing from education in the autumn term, as we establish where families have moved away during the summer or have elected for private education, there has been significant work undertaken to seek the whereabouts of the individuals concerned. The number we are still clarifying is now at a much lower rate than in the last 12 months. There is a national secure reporting system where schools can advise when someone enrolls at a different school than expected.
- 6.16.** The number of new EHC plans completed has averaged at around 180 per quarter.
- 6.17.** Despite a small reduction, quarter 3 performance still demonstrates the success of the work that has been ongoing to increase the availability of Educational Psychologists (EP). The increasing number of Education and Health Care plans open will create increased pressure on this service.
- 6.18.** The year end timeliness for Education, Health and Care Plans of 37% represents the outturn reported in January as part of the SEN2 statutory return to the DfE. Q3 performance of 67% therefore reflects the position from January – December 2021 and is broadly in line with statistical neighbour average of 68.1 reported last year. The statutory return for 2021 is now being collated and verified for submission by 3 March 2022.
- 6.19.** Timely reviews of EHC plans remains a priority and despite the increasing numbers of plans together with new requests there has been improvement in the number completed in timescales.

Prevention and Early Help

Measure	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22	Quarter 2 2021/22	Quarter 3 2021/22
Current number of open Early Help Assessments/ plans (excluding short breaks)	1085	1031	1105	1099
% of all open Early Help Assessments led by Cheshire East Prevention service staff	69%	65%	66%	62%
% 0-2 year olds engaged at children centres (most vulnerable i.e. CIN/CP/LAC that have attended 3 or more times in the last 12 months)	23%	20%	29%	28%
% eligible children taking up 2 year old offer (termly figure only)	68%	71%	71%	73%

% children taking up 3 and 4 year old offer (termly figure only)	94%	93%	93%	95%
Number of families meeting the Supporting People (previously family focus) criteria where outcomes have been successfully concluded (quarterly fig)	318 target achieved	87	129	103
Number of young people accessing the youth support service		1634	2,050	1,345
Number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	174	172	71	137
% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	2.3%	2.3%	0.95%	1.8%

- 6.20.** 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.
- 6.21.** The number of early help assessments that are led by Cheshire East staff has reduced slightly with partners now 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.
- 6.22.** The take up of the 2, 3 and 4 year old offer reflects the position at the end of the autumn term and it is positive to see such a high uptake. 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.
- 6.23.** The Supporting People Programme (formally family 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 Q3, 319 families had been successfully supported in 2021/22. Indications for the early part of Q4 show that we will achieve the number of families successfully supported.
- 6.24.** Q3 shows a reduction in the number of individuals receiving support from the youth service, however Q2 was inflated by a significant number of larger group events due to well attended summer activities. We continue to offer a blended approach of face to face and virtual services to maximise the support available.
- 6.25.** As predicted the NEET figure has increased as individuals decide their initial plans for the autumn term may not be the best fit for them personally. Despite this we continue to enjoy one of the lowest positions in the country demonstrating our success in effectively supporting our young people to fulfil their potential – the latest England position available is 2.8%.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

7.1.1. There are no direct legal implications.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. Although there are no direct financial implications or changes to the MTFS as a result of this briefing paper, performance measures may be used as an indicator of where more or less funding is needed at a service level.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. There are no direct policy implications.

7.4. Equality

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

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. There are no direct human resource implications.

7.6. Risk Management

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

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. 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.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. 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