

## **Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 28 September 2020

**Report Title:** Performance Update – Quarter 1 2020-21

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

**Senior Officer:** Mark Palethorpe – Executive Director of People

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### **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 1 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 1.
  - 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 1 of 2020-21 (1 April 2020 – 30 June 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
  - Attendance at Childrens Centres and Youth Support work been has 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 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 4 2019/20	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 1 2019/20
Number of referrals	2546	562	539	633
Percentage of repeat referrals	16%	15%	18%	17%
Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days	86%	80%	77%	83%
Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection (CP) plan (rolling yr)	21.7%	22%	21%	23%
Number of children in need	1689	1689	1830	1774
Number of children with a child protection plan	253	253	274	275
% of children on CP plans reviewed within timescales	89.6%	93%	100%	93%
Number of cared for children	534	534	544	481
% of cared for children reviewed within timescales	88%	94%	99%	93%
% of cared for children in internal foster care (including friends and family placements)	37%	37%	30%	38%
% of children living in external foster homes	28%	28%	28%	29%
% of children living in residential homes	8%	8%	7%	8%
% of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	29%	29%	29%	27%
% of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	55%	55%	48%	47%
% of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation	95%	95%	97%	96%
Total number of children with a court endorsed plan of adoption (snapshot figure)	38	38	53	32
Number of children adopted (YTD)	17	17	0	5
Average caseload of social workers	25	25	24	23

5.5 Compared to quarter 1 (Q1) last year we are approximately 15% down on referrals to the front door with, unsurprisingly, a notable decline in those received from schools - accounting for only 4% of referrals in Q1 this year compared to 20% last year. Throughout this period Health and Police referrals have remained constant. This level of reduction has equally been seen nationally and regionally and our conversation rate from contact to

referral has remained favourable, suggesting that services are recognising safeguarding issues and referring in despite the change in circumstances.

- 5.6 Whilst there has been national news around potential increases in contacts around cases with Domestic Violence as a factor, levels in Cheshire East have remained consistent with the picture seen throughout the same period last year.
- 5.7 Of concern however is the fact we have seen a substantial increase in contacts to the front door where concerns include the mental health of a child or adult in the household. Compared to Q1 in 2019/20 this is up by almost 50% in this quarter alone. Discussions are already taking place across services and partner agencies with regards to the services in place to support this, especially regarding the needs of children as they transition back to schools.
- 5.8 Contacting, visiting and reviews for children throughout this period has remained consistently high with a range of virtual and socially distancing meetings taking place as appropriate. The data from the DfE return suggests that we are consistently higher than national and statistical neighbours in maintaining a minimum of 4 weekly contact by case holding team with all families (however there is a note of caution in the consistency of how this is captured). Positively, a number of young people have welcomed the flexibility of utilising a range of technologies for service delivery and contacts and this feedback is being used to develop new ways of working. Likewise there has been considerable positive feedback around Personal Advisors meeting young people for socially distancing walks and the benefits this has had.
- 5.9 Due to a number of staffing pressures, together with the difficulties in being able to consistently meet face to face, there is however, delays emerging in the timeliness of assessments. The service are closely monitoring this and the message has been very clear to all teams that, regardless of timeliness, if the quality of assessment isn't to standard then management challenge will be provided to workers and assessments will be returned for further work.
- 5.10 Within Q1 we were reporting that, along with approximately 70% of Local authorities, we were experiencing a 0-10% increase in the cost of foster care placements, and with 65% of local authorities a 0-10% increase in residential costs.
- 5.11 Whilst overall numbers in residential placements haven't increased, we have experienced an increase in having to place in residential during this

period due to a shortage in foster care provision and this is now having an increasing impact on overall costs

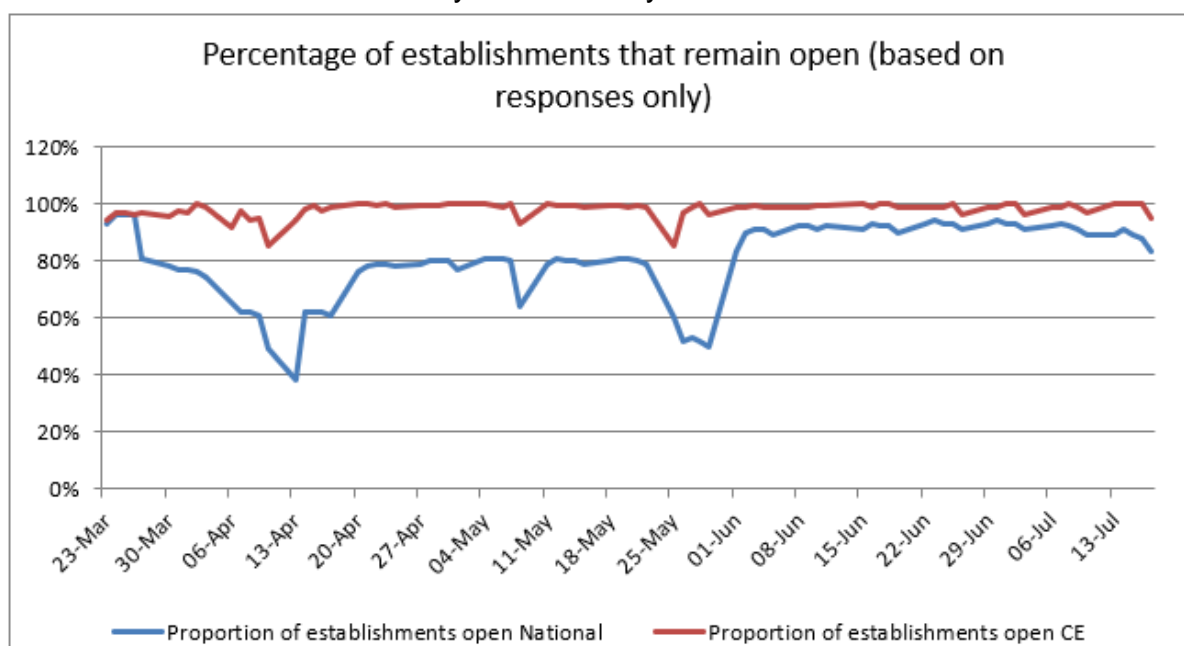
- 5.12 This has been compounded with delays in care proceedings due to court delays which in Q1 peaked at 54% of all cases being out of timescales. This of course has therefore also had an adverse impact on Adoption completions and children moving to long-term stable homes.

## Education and Skills

Measure	Quarter 4 2019/20	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 1 2019/20
Percentage good or outstanding primary schools	93%	Not available	92%
Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools	80%	Not available	76%
Percentage good or outstanding special schools	80%	Not available	80%
Percentage attendance for primary pupils year to date	96%	Not available	96%
Percentage attendance for secondary pupils year to date	94%	Not available	94%
Percentage attendance for special school pupils year to date	91%	Not available	90%
Number of permanent exclusions from Cheshire East Schools (latest half term available)	15	Not available	2
Current Number of pupils educated at home	386	345	380
Current number of children missing from education.	38	25	28
Percentage of Good/ Outstanding PEPs	87%	76%	78%
Total number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)	2533	2722	2335
% of requests for Educational Psychologists (EP) advice completed within 6 weeks	25%	Not available	53%
Special Educational Needs – Education, Health and Care Plans completion within 20 weeks including exceptions (cumulative yr)	42%	37%	30%
Average number of weeks for EHC Plans to be issued (snap shot at quarter end to which it relates)	21.6	23.5	27.5
% EHCP annual review completed in timescales	72%	65%	72%

- 5.13 At the start of lockdown the DfE announced the cessation of all inspections and as such there is not updated data available. This will be the same for Q2.
- 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.

- 5.15 Throughout Q1 we remained consistently higher than the national picture for schools that responded to the DfE request to remain open and available for attendance. The dips relate to the Easter Bank holiday weekend and the May Bank holiday weekends.



- 5.16 Education teams contacted all schools, initially on a daily basis which then moved to weekly as we progressed through lockdown, to identify any key issues, emerging trends and in the latter stages of May and early June to prepare for re-opening. In total throughout Q1 approximately 2,000 calls were made to the 171 schools in CE.
- 5.17 It is important to note that the elected home education (EHE) figure only relates to those individuals that meet the formal definition of EHE and does not reflect the current Covid-19 situation. The elective home education team have continued to support this specific cohort. In addition however the education team provided support to all schools in their approach to providing suitable online education for all pupils that were educated at home during this time.
- 5.18 Likewise, the number of individuals missing from education are those meeting the formal definition of missing from education. Those vulnerable pupils who are eligible to attend school throughout the Covid-19 pandemic but are not attending an establishment are being regularly contacted either by school or support workers as appropriate.
- 5.19 As at the end of June approximately 20% of the total pupil cohort were back in the 151 schools that responded to the DfE with over 50% of expected pupils back in the open primary school years.

- 5.20 In addition regular contact was maintained with all SEND pupils educated out of the authority with the schools routinely updated and contacted regarding support available and updates on plans and progress.
- 5.21 Education, health and care (EHC) plans continued to be completed despite the difficulties in being able to assess pupils in a classroom environment and it is extremely positive that the percentage completed in timescales in Q1 was higher than those completed in Q1 the previous year, with the average number of weeks for completion reduced from 27.5 in Q1 19/20 to 23.5 in Q1 20/21.

### Prevention and Early Help

Measure	Quarter 4 2019/20	Quarter 1 2020/21	Quarter 1 2019/20
Current number of open Early Help Assessments/ plans	1100	1070	1016
% of all open Early Help Assessments led by Cheshire East Prevention service staff	61%	61%	73%
% 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	28%
% eligible children taking up 2 year old offer (termly figure only)	79%	Not available	68%
% children taking up 3 and 4 year old offer (termly figure only)	97%-98%	Not available	97%-99%
Number of Families meeting the family focus criteria where outcomes have been successfully concluded (quarterly fig)	97 (1900 cumulative)	80	182 (1382 cumulative)
Number of young people accessing the youth support service	1228	Not available	1,576
Number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	199	210	165
% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	2.8%	2.9%	2.3%

- 5.22 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 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 2 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.



- 5.23 As with the Education data there has been a weekly submission to the DfE to monitor all Early Years settings that were open and attendance by the vulnerable cohorts to ensure that all those that needed support had a suitable service in place. This required weekly contacting over 400 settings, compiling all the data and submitting this in a timely fashion.
- 5.24 As at the end of June 53% of all early years settings were open, with this ranging from 74% of the schools settings, 60% of PVI's and 41% of childminders. 75% of vulnerable children (i.e those with a social worker or and EHC plan) were accessing a setting.
- 5.25 Early Help Assessments and work has continued throughout the quarter with family support workers undertaking a vital role in ensuring regular contact and support has been maintained with all our families and the number open and supported was higher than Q1 last year. Importantly partners continued to play a vital role in leading where possible.
- 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 Q1 we were on target with successful outcomes for 80 families achieved.
- 5.27 As at the end of June there were 1267 individuals being helped within the Prevention and Early Help Directorate through the "People helping People" scheme with support packages to prevent child neglect and escalation of cases in to Social Care.
- 5.28 Despite the Youth Service being unable to complete a range of planned activities the service has quickly gone virtual including remote youth clubs, quizzes and bake-off's.
- 5.29 958 young people attended sessions, albeit virtually over the first quarter.
- 5.30 The not in education, employment or training (NEET) figures are increasing and showing at 2.9%. This is in line with other authorities and is compounded by training providers having difficulty finding work placements.

## **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:

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