

Report to: Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 2 October 2014

Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Social Care (Adults and Children's Services)

Report Author: Head of Children and Family Services

Title: Looked After Children – Performance Indicators

1. What is the report about?

The report focusses on the health and social care indicators that appeared to be of concern in respect of the end of year performance statistics on looked after children as detailed in the Director of Social Services Annual Report and Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement letter.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide Members' with information regarding particular performance indicators, an explanation of the reason for the position on performance, and the steps as necessary to improve.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Members comment and provide challenges on areas of concern.

4. Report details.

There are a range of indicators in the Performance Measures for Looked After Children. Members in their earlier meeting were particularly concerned about three areas:

- Education
- Health Indicators in particular Health Assessments
- Looked After Children – Placement stability

The report on Education performance, External Examinations, incorporates information on looked after children so this report does not seek to address that.

In relation to the Health Assessments indicator, the level of performance has been of concern to the Service. There are two components to the concern. First the delays in getting medical reports from relevant medical practitioners, and second the availability of a Looked After Children (LAC) Nurse to provide ongoing support to the looked after children population.

In response to these concerns changes have been made via Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCU) to the provision of health assessments by allowing them to be undertaken by the wider range of health personnel. Secondly we have, since April 2014, had a full time LAC Nurse based from Brighton Road, Rhyl. Prior to that the role was shared between two part time nurses both based away from the Children's Services Offices.

In relation to stability of placements, the concern was about the children who have had three or more placement moves in a year. It is important to recognise that the indicator does not, at present, differentiate between positive moves e.g., to return to family, adoption etc, and when placements break down. In the year in question we set an intervention level at 10% and actually achieved 10.37%. This for Denbighshire was 17 children out of 164 Looked After Children.

In that year this included:

- One child who was in hospital
- Two children who were sentenced to a period in a Young Offender Institution
- Two children returned to their parents
- Three children who were placed with relatives

There were a small cohort, approximately 7 children where we found it difficult to find stable accommodation that would meet their needs, and they moved to a few placements before that could be achieved.

We monitor our performance through an internal panel mechanism. We have sought to enhance that further to minimise placement moves that are not in line with the child's plan. The indicator is regularly monitored through the year to ensure we seek to respond in a timely way to concerns.

These matters were the subject of extensive challenge through the Service Challenge Meeting which took place on the 12th September 2014.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The report relates to how we protect vulnerable children and look after them when it is not possible for them to be with their parents.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no direct cost implications as a result of this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

The report relates to children but does not specifically propose any changes to the service or policy response to their needs.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

This matter was subject of attention within the Service Challenge process on the 12th September 2014.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The report does not propose any changes in respect of financial aspects or costs to the Council.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no specific risks in respect of this report.

11. Power to make the Decision

The Council's duties in respect of Looked After Children are dealt with under the Children Act 1989.

Article 6.3.4(b) outlines scrutiny's powers with respect to performance monitoring.

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