
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Monday 14th March 2022

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 3 (1st October 2021 to 31st December 2021)

Purpose

1. To present the Quarter 3 position for Children's Services of the financial year 2021/22 covering the period 1st October to 31st December 2021.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee review the contents of this report and that any identified performance issues are referred to the relevant Cabinet Member.

Background

3. The Quarter 3 performance report incorporates quarterly key performance measures. Within Children's Services there are six (6) Performance Indicators across two (2) Council Priorities: -
 - One Council – Building a Dynamic and Sustainable Organisation – **1 measure**
 - Strong and Safer Communities – **5 measures**

For 2021/22, two (2) new measures were introduced for Children's Services and were reported to Children and Young People's Scrutiny in September.

4. **Performance Summary**

One Council – Building a Dynamic and Sustainable Organisation

PI.2249 - % of social work posts unfilled by permanent or agency staff
Target – **16%**

Q2 position – 12.01%

Q3 position – **4.17%**

This is a new measure for 2021/22.

Performance has **improved significantly** as a whole team of temporary workers was recruited in Safeguarding and Support. **This is a for a period of 12 weeks.**

An increase in the number of social workers in post has reduced average caseloads for staff, with the average being 26.7 October 2021 to 22.0 December 2021. This means that staff will have more time to spend on cases.

Workforce Board continues to meet monthly with a single focus on social worker posts. However, locally, regionally and nationally, challenges remain recruiting social workers. We continue to market vacancies through social media and whilst there is some success, staff turnover limits the impact of any new starters.

Strong and Safer Communities

PI.432 Number of Looked After Children per 10,000 of the child population

Target – **85.4**

Stat Neighbour Average – 85.4

Q2 position – 86.6

Q3 position – **84.9**

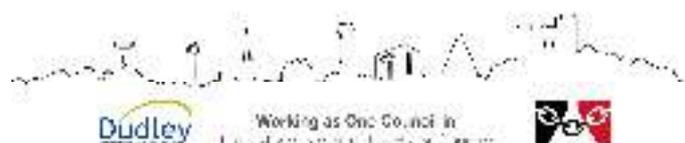
Our performance is telling us that in Quarter 3, we had more children exiting care than those entering the care system. 42 children entered the care system, compared to 46 children who exited care. Success means more children exiting care than those coming into care.

2 out of 46 were adopted. We also had a high number of children whose carers were granted special guardianship (14 in total).

12 children returned to live with parents after their orders were discharged – this was as a result of successful intervention with parents.

We need to continue to increase the number of children with a plan of special guardianship as well as those whose plan is to return to their birth family.

Progress is slow for those children whose plan is to return to birth parents due to delays in access to suitable housing. This is being addressed through ongoing work with Housing colleagues.



In terms of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's), we are working on increasing the number of carers who wish to pursue special guardianship orders – these are reviewed regularly in the SGO panel.

We are using 'placement with parents' positively i.e; after a period of intervention and assessment of some parents whose children were removed, we are placing the children on orders back with parents with a plan to discharge the orders after a period of sustained change.

Again, this is dependent on parents' access to suitable housing and work is underway in order for this cohort of parents to be given housing priority status.

During Quarter 3, 42 children entered care. We are hoping to see fewer children, particularly teenagers entering or exiting care within a month as a result of the Edge of Care work that will be undertaken by the Families First team.

PI.426 Timeliness of Single Assessments - % Completed Within 45 Working Days
(Assessment service only)

Target – **85.5%**

Stat Neighbour Average – 85.5%

Q2 position – 90.3%

Q3 position – 72.1%

Our performance has declined over Quarter 3 as a direct result of increased workload within the assessment service. This has led to a growing number of children being allocated to social workers (workload of 50+) slowing down assessment completion and throughput. This pressure has arisen from an increase in referrals from the MASH; an inability to move children on CIN plans over to Safeguarding and Support because of staffing issues in that service and a number of high-risk situations that have led to intensive work and care applications.

We now have two managed project teams who are working with 240 children at any one time. This is supporting the transfer of children on CIN and CP plans from the Assessment service as per the transfer policy.

The number of children on Children In Need plans in the assessment teams are now low and pending closure. Pathways for transfer to the project teams are clear and understood and we are now able to achieve real time transfers into the service.

We also have the new Child In Need / Edge of Care team (mentioned previously in the report) that launched on 24th January 2022. Work is currently underway to transfer a cohort of children into this multi-agency team which will also enable swifter exit from the Assessment Team.

An interim Team Manager has also been recruited to cover sickness and this will support overall manager capacity to monitor performance and sign off work. Work is also currently underway to support smoother step-down processes, and this will further enable more timely transfer out of the service.

PI.433 Number of children subject to child protection plan per 10,000 of the child population

Target – **55.1**

Statutory Neighbour Average – 55.1

Q2 position – 37.5

Q3 position – 43.1

Current rate is 43.1% compared to 40.8% last month (December 2021); 304 children are subject to Child Protection Plans as of 17th January 2021.

This is an increase from last month's figure which was 288 (this is a continuing trend upwards).

This continuing trend could be for the following reasons: -

- Confirmation of true figure as there may be children within LCS pathways where the CP Plans have in fact ended
- Correlation between the increase of repeat Child Protection Plans – and alignment to work to understand this trend and reduce the occurrence of repeat planning
- Plans are lasting longer, which may be a positive indicator that Child Protection Plans are used to give assurance that sustained change has occurred to reduce the repeat planning.

If CP numbers continue to increase, there will be a pressure on Independent Review Officer caseloads.

Currently we have three Child Protection Chairs who mainly hold CP work; we may need to increase this capacity (using current establishment resources).

In line with the Restorative Vision, we expect to see CP numbers to fall so that more children are living with families where needs can be met outside of statutory intervention.

Current actions in place: -



- Consistency of CP Chairs – having Chairs who have a majority CP caseload so threshold can be applied consistently
- Need to review the arrangements of the IRO Duty system and threshold discussion prior to ICPC to determine if this impacts on CP numbers; and having children on the right plan at the right time
- Work on restorative approach to Conferences – if the plan is agreed prior to the threshold decision this may mean agencies are more likely to have confidence in stepping down to CIN Plans earlier
- IRO QA and DRP systems to have discussions with Team Managers earlier, particularly for repeat CP Plan children, or children who have plans longer than 15 months

NB - When comparing this measure to our target and statistical neighbours, **we consider the figure to be neutral**, as without extensive analysis, it is impossible to determine whether an increase/decrease is positive or negative.

For example, a decrease in this measure might mean that we are ending plans too early (negative) or that we are making good progress in ending plans where they are no longer necessary (positive).

PI. 2250 % of closed Early Help Cases that were not open to Level 4 Services less than 6 months after closure +

Target – **86%**

Q2 position – 91.8%

Q3 position – **91.8%**

This is a new measure for 2021/22.

91.8% of cases that were closed to Early Help have not been open to Social Care in the following 6 months following closure. This high figure tells us that our Early Help offer is effective.

By definition, Early Help is about dealing with issues before they require statutory intervention, and this figure tells us we are having an impact. We would never anticipate reaching 100% of all cases due to the significant number of uncontrollable factors but a figure that is above 90% provides evidence for the meaningful work that is taking place across the whole Early Help Partnership.

The ongoing risks to service delivery of maintaining a high figure of cases not escalating are mainly focused on capacity and the turnover of cases in Early Help.



We monitor cases that are open both over 6 months and 12 months and have Head of Service oversight through performance challenge, on the reasons why these cases are still open. Managers may feel the need to keep cases open for longer (where necessary) to ensure changes that have been made for the family are embedded and maintained.

If we keep cases open for longer to ensure that changes stick this can impact on the flow of work as new cases still need allocating. We have a strong management team in Early Help who maintain regular management oversight and we are assured cases are open for as long as they need to be.

Whilst capacity and flow of work may be impacted the end result is that we are keeping families away from requiring statutory social care involvement which in turn reduces pressure on these services.

The figures are testament to the fact that Early Help is proving effective. We have no evidence to say if any of these families would have required statutory involvement if they had not received an Early Help intervention.

What we can say is that there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that if an issue goes unaddressed there is an increased possibility these issues will get worse, not better, and end up requiring Level 4 support.

The actions we have in place to maintain this figure are around regular management oversight of staff caseloads and cases of particular concern. Partnership working to ensure all elements of the family's life have the right support in place is also a key element. Staff that are passionate and committed to working closely with families to achieve the best possible outcomes is also a major factor in our success.

We are also being told that families really appreciate and value the support they have received and regularly praise and compliment Early Help staff for providing support that has helped them address and manage the issues they may have been struggling with prior to our involvement. Families are also receptive to the restorative approaches we are implementing across our Family Centres.

PI.2129 % of eligible children who take up a 'Time for Two's' place in the Dudley Borough

Target – **70%**

Q2 position – 87.7%

Q3 position – 100%

There is evidence to show the picture is improving. All staff are actively encouraging parents and carers to take up their 2-year-old place.



Different strategies regarding where to engage with families and ensuring through phone calls to the service and working with settings to encourage parents to take up the offer is also taking place.

The 2-year-old funded banners that settings can display outside their provision have been sent to those providers who needed them or needed them replaced.

Staff are also explaining in more detail the benefits of a child taking up a 2-year-old place in a provision, how it helps a child cognitively, physically, socially and improves the very important area of communication and language skills.

There is also the importance of school readiness and how being in a setting prepares children for the universal Early Education Funding the term after their third birthday.

All professionals are reminded to continually promote two-year funding in team meetings and supervisions.

Q3 Summary

Of the six (6) Performance Indicators, all but one of the measures have shown a positive movement when compared to Quarter 2 of 2021/22 against the target numerator.

The service interventions being put in are having a positive impact on performance with a steady senior workforce contributing to driving improvements across Children Services.

The Quarter 1 report highlighted the COVID-19 impact and removal of lockdown restrictions which would see performance levels improve and this is tangible across the measures since then in an improvement in Quarter 2 and now Quarter 3.

Directorate Service Delivery

Inclusive to the report the Directorate Service Summary document provides a detailed account of actions against the Children's Services Directorate Plan. Please refer to appendix 1 within the performance report for further information.

5. There are no alternative options to be made in receiving this report.

Finance

6. There are no direct financial implications in receiving this report.



Law

7. There are no direct legal implications in receiving this report

Risk Management

8. The current performance reporting period, risk management is contained and reviewed in the performance reporting, however as part of the new risk management framework approved at audit and standards committee, risk reporting will not sit within performance and each directorate will need to develop a risk register for monitoring purposes.

Equality Impact

9. There are no special considerations to be made with regard to equality and diversity in noting and receiving this report.
10. No proposals have been carried out.
11. No proposals have been made, therefore does not impact on children and young people.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

12. There are no specific direct human resource issues in receiving this report. In terms of the Council's sickness level and the management of attendance, the HR and OD team continues to work with Directors and Heads of Service to assist and provide support in tackling those areas identified as having high levels of sickness

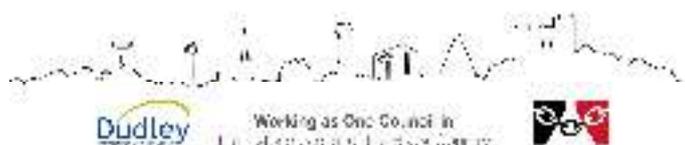
Commercial/Procurement

13. There is no direct commercial impact.

Council Priorities

14. The Council Plan and the Performance Management Framework enables a consistent approach for performance management across the organisation, aligning the Council Plan, Borough Vision and Future Council Programme and provides that golden thread between them.

Our Council Plan is built around 4 key priority areas. The Council Plan is a 3-year '[Plan on a Page](#)'. Each directorate has a Directorate Plan that aligns to the priority outcomes that the Council is striving to achieve, as outlined within the Council Plan, and includes



an assessment of how the service has contributed towards these priorities along with a range of key performance indicators to enable us to keep track of progress.

Performance management is key in delivering the longer-term vision of the Council. Quarterly Corporate Performance Reports are reported and reviewed by Strategic Executive Board, Informal Cabinet, the Deputy and Shadow Deputy Leader and Future Council Scrutiny Committee

This will help to enable the council to deliver the objectives and outcomes of the Council Plan and in turn the Borough Vision



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Appendices

Directorate Service Summary Key Actions – Children's Services



Childrens Services
2021-22 Directorate

