

TITLE OF REPORT: Edge of Care Review

REPORT OF: Sheena Ramsey, Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the course of this review Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee have agreed to focus on support to young people and families with complex needs on the edge of care. The committee will consider the needs of these families and what actions will have the greatest impact on improving the lives of families with complex higher level needs.

This report sets out the scope of the review and processes to take it forward.

LEGAL POLICY CONTEXT

Working Together statutory guidance – outlines the requirements of LA to have an LSCB, interagency child protection procedures, how to undertake safeguarding investigations. The guidance confirms the lead role for LA social workers in:

- Responding to young people and families in need of support and help
 - Undertaking initial and core assessments as part of the Assessment Framework
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BACKGROUND

1. The council is committed to making changes to service delivery in order to meet the changing demands for adolescent young people on the edge of care.
2. The National picture of adolescent young people on the edge of the care system indicates this age group makes up 45% of Children in Need, 23% of children on a child protection plan and 24% of Serious Case Reviews⁴. A typical new case for a social worker is just as likely to be a teenager in need of help as a child aged under five.
3. Adolescents often enter care during a crisis with their family, with the police or with their mental or emotional health. The response to this crisis and finding them a safe place tends to drive the system's immediate response.
4. The reasons for entering care and the level and complexity of need are also far more diverse amongst this group. The national picture by the age 14 years abuse or neglect accounts for just 42% of entries to care, with 45% accounted for by a mixture of acute family stress, family dysfunction and socially unacceptable behaviour.

Alongside this, many face challenges with their mental and emotional health (64%), special educational needs (38%) and substance misuse (32%). Around 9% of those aged 14 or older enter care through the youth justice system. One third of adolescents placed in foster care have been recently cautioned or committed an offence (36%).

5. Faced with this complexity, and the challenges in identifying long-term options, the care system is often caught between two competing priorities: to provide an immediate place of safety; and to develop a long-term plan based on individual needs.
6. The national picture for many adolescents is the most likely long-term placement is back with their family. One in four adolescent entrants to care almost 3,000 young people a year are looked after for less than eight weeks.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

7. It is proposed the review focuses on;
 - The committee is asked to review the challenges facing services for adolescents on the edge of care and what might help to overcome these challenges.
 - What are the key ingredients to successful approaches to supporting young people and their families with complex needs on the edge of care.
 - What are the elements of service design that will support best practice with young people on the edge of care.
 - Strengthen service delivery to better meet the needs of local families with multiple needs at risk of becoming looked after.
 - Succeed in safely reducing the numbers of children coming into care

THE PROCESS

8. The process of the review will take place through to October 2017. It will involve the presentation of evidence and research.

WHO WILL BE INVOLVED?

9. It is proposed that the evidence will provide an overview of the relationship between care wellbeing and learning, health, housing and education which will further refine an understanding of the issues.

PROPOSED OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW

- To strengthen design and practice delivery of services for young people with complex needs on the edge of care.
- To support the safe reduction in the numbers of adolescents entering care.

RECOMMENDATION

10. The Committee is asked to agree the scope, process and timescale as set out in this report.

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