

TITLE OF REPORT: **Monitoring of OSC Review of Child Protection in Gateshead**

REPORT OF: **Sheila Lock, Interim Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning**

Summary

This is the second monitoring report, providing information on progress that has been made to implement recommendations from the Review of Child Protection in Gateshead undertaken in 2015/16 and agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th April 2016.

Purpose of report

This report highlights progress on the implementation of the Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) review of Child Protection in Gateshead and seeks the Committee's views on progress to date and the future planned approach.

Background

In 2015/16 the Families OSC reviewed how the Council and its partners are supporting Child Protection in Gateshead. The scope and aims of the review were agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 18th June 2015. The review focused on the specific aspects of the system that are concerned with child protection, following the potential steps for a child who becomes subject to a child protection plan.

The key issues that were considered during the 4 evidence gathering sessions were:

- An understanding of the child protection system, the policy context and clarity on roles and responsibilities
- The opportunity for improvement of systems
- The effectiveness of multi-agency working, especially around communication and information sharing.
- The ways in which views of children, young people and their families are used.

Key recommendations from the review were identified as:

- i) Additional work is undertaken to further improve the availability of GP reports at Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) and Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC).
- ii) Improve the detail of data provided in relation to school referrals to children's social care. Providing a breakdown by school to facilitate the committee's scrutiny of safeguarding within education.
- iii) To review the evidence in light of the latest Ofsted inspection findings published on 11 March 2016
- iv) To consider and evaluate the appropriateness of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as part of the redesign of Care, Wellbeing and Learning.

Implementing the review - this progress report provides an update on activity relating to the recommendations agreed by the Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Improve the availability of GP reports at Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) and Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC)

In 2014-15 (financial year) data evidenced that less than a third of conferences had reports provided by GPs (both ICPCs and RCPC's). An extensive piece of work was undertaken with health to address concerns, including visits to practice and facilitating training workshops in April 2015.

- Between April 2015 and March 2016, a significant improvement was made in GP reports provided to conference – this figure stood at 70.4%.
- Quarter 1 data for 2016-17 (financial year) showed that this had decreased to 61%.
- Quarter 1 to quarter 3 data (April to December 2016) shows the most recent figure for GP reports provided to conference is 61.7%.
- Regular monitoring of the GP contribution to report writing is taking place jointly with the CCG and Safeguarding Children Unit.
- The Safeguarding Children Unit has been meeting with health on a quarterly basis to address any specific concerns and the CCG are aware of the decline in performance.
- The quarterly report received for the meetings with health does highlight specific GP practices to address areas of concern.
- The Safeguarding Children Unit has implemented an additional weekly report to identify any issues with data recording for GP reports (identifies gaps in reports provided from specific practices as well as any inputting issues by senior clerks). This weekly report provides a robust mechanism to immediately identify issues and address them, rather than relying on cumbersome ad-hoc/quarterly data sweeps.
- All GP Practices are aware of the need to contribute to the child protection process. There is a rolling programme of training for GPs in this regard, delivered by the CCG.

The lack of or late submissions in GP and agencies' reports to conference is an ongoing concern which can result in key pieces of information missing that are crucial to decision making and determining risk. Whilst performance figures have improved since 2014-2015, there has been a fall in performance since last year

and the number of reports provided by GP's to conference has decreased. This remains a priority area with work ongoing between the CCG and the Local Authority Safeguarding Unit.

i) To improve the detail of data provided in relation to school referrals to children's social care: Providing a breakdown by school to facilitate the committee's scrutiny of safeguarding within education.

- From April to September 2016, 83 referrals from schools had school as the source of the referral, but only 15 had school relationships recorded.
- There have been 150 referrals from schools between April 2016 and December 2016 and 287 contacts (i.e. the school has contacted children's services but it did not progress to referral).
- All 150 school referrals had the name of the school recorded. The breakdown of referrals by school will help facilitate the committee's scrutiny of safeguarding within education.
- Further monitoring and reporting will continue in order to provide robust information in this regard.

ii) To review the evidence in light of the latest Ofsted inspection findings published on 11th March 2016

- Following publication of the Ofsted report an action plan has been developed with a number of areas that focus on child protection. These are being taken forward and monitored through regular meetings and scrutinised by the Service Director for Children and Families Social Work.

Inspection recommendation: Improve the quality of all children's plans, including pathway plans to ensure that targets for improvement are clear and that they focus on risk and the most important issues for children, young people and care leavers.

- New Care Plans, Child in Need and Looked After Children plans have been formatted based on audit and inspection findings
- Targeted training for Social Workers team managers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) has been developed and rolled out. A series of training workshops have been delivered to ensure staff including IROs and CP Chairs are equipped to write comprehensive and outcome focused plans with clear timescales and contingencies.
- A final training workshop has taken place specifically for health colleagues and those in other disciplines so that they are aware of the format of the new plans.
- Refresher training is planned at twice-yearly intervals for new social workers or other professionals who are likely to be involved in child protection conferences or with Looked after Children.
- Specific audit documentation has been developed to focus on plans taking account of the new planning template in order to provide assurance that the changes are achieving the desired outcome.
- Core group documentation has been revised in light of the new planning framework in order to support the core group monitoring the progress of the plan

Inspection recommendation: Ensure that children who are subject to child protection processes have access to independent advocacy in order to help share their views and to inform decisions about their lives.

- Dedicated staff members in the Referral and Assessment team provide support to children and young people who are subject to child protection enquiries, facilitating their participation in Care Plan processes and ensuring their voice is heard either directly at conference or indirectly through written or drawn submission.
- Mind of My Own (MOMO) being promoted by Social Workers for children and young people's involvement in Child Protection conferences.
- Monitoring use of MOMO and where issues are raised ensure advocacy is offered – from April 2016 to December 2016, 24 CP conference reports included the views of the child via MOMO.
- 15% of all completed MOMOs have related to the child's voice being heard at CP conferences.
- Work is ongoing with NYAS, the commissioned provider for independent advocacy, to enhance the service offer for children and young people who are being supported through the child protection process.

iii) To consider and evaluate the appropriateness of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as part of the redesign of Care, Wellbeing and Learning.

- Service Directors are considering all options for future development in conjunction with support from the Transformation team. The final proposal is yet to be determined.

Summary

Progress has been made against all the recommendations arising from the review but further work is required to maintain improvements or further improve. The recommendations are being taken forward within the framework for improvement for Children's Social Care and as such connect to ongoing areas of service development.

Recommendations

Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to: -

- Note progress achieved in the seven months since the last report in September 2016.
- Note the measures in place to make or sustain improvements.
- Comment on whether the Committee is satisfied with the level of progress to date.

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