

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE BRIEFING

27th May 2020

REPORT AUTHOR: Jan Coles, Head of Children's Services

SUBJECT: Children's Services April Performance

REPORT FOR: Information

Children's Services Update

Workforce

Workforce absences due to COVID-19 have reduced and hasn't affected service provision. So as at 18th May:

- 20 staff in the service were self-isolating due to being in a shielding or vulnerable group but are working from home undertaking partial duties (e.g. not able to undertake visits if in a Social Worker role or not able to be on the office rota if in a Business Support role).
- There are no staff off work due to having COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed diagnosis.

We are extremely pleased to report that we have been able to recruit 3 permanent qualified social workers into our frontline teams (2 of these are newly qualified). Once safer recruitment checks are undertaken start dates will be agreed.

As of the end of April 2020 the number of agency staff being employed had reduced to 29, this is a reduction from 45 in September 2019. This evidences the impact of the work the service has undertaken to stabilise the workforce and recruit permanent social workers. The Service has plans to pick back up the 'Grow our own Social Workers' project work that was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During April the service had 3.8 FTE new staff starters and no leavers for the second consecutive month. Alongside this the average days sickness is reported at 0.8 days per FTE for April, this is lowest figure for the last 12 months.

Performance

Key points to note in April performance report:-

- **CP stat visits** – 97% of child protection statutory visits were undertaken within timescale in April. The teams have worked extremely hard and undertook 306 child protection visits in total - an increase from 284 in March.
- **CLA stat visits** – Despite the challenges due to COVID-19 the percentage of CLA statutory visits undertaken in timescale was recorded at 92% in April. The performance indicator has now been consistently over 90% since August 2019.
- **Placement stability** - % of children looked after who have had three or more placements during the year was recorded in April as 4% for the second consecutive month. This continues to be consistently well below the national average in Wales.
- **Contacts to Front Door** – Of the 393 contacts made to the Front Door in April, 87% were supported and managed with information, advice and Early Help and not referred to statutory services. This figure has consistently been between 85 and 89% for the last 5 months.
- **Re-registrations on the CPR** – there were no re-registrations on the CPR in April.
- **Compliments & Complaints** - 4 compliments and 3 complaints.

Areas on the performance report to note:

- **Drop in assessments performance** – Assessments completed in timescale (includes wellbeing and S47's jointly) has seen a dip in performance in March 81% and April 74%. All assessment data is being reviewed and monitored as part of the weekly data meetings which have re-started in the last fortnight. The Assessment Team has recently merged their rota with EDT as part of a pilot project during COVID-19. There have been some teething problems during the transitional period which have now been resolved.
- **S47s undertaken in timescale** - 74% completed in timescale which was a decrease from March. 42 S47's were completed in total and 11 of these were out of timescale spread over 5 teams. A deep delve into these 11 as part of performance meetings between Head of Service and Senior Managers showed that the reasons for being out of timescale included a recording/cloning error for a sibling group (so it was in timescale but cloned incorrectly), delay in waiting for information from the Police and delay in management sign off due to capacity which has been addressed.
- **Increase in CLA** – Increase to 251
Number of children becoming looked after 8
Number of children ceasing to be looked after 0
The service is concerned about the increase in CLA and it is being reviewed as part of Head of Service/Senior Manager performance meetings as well as the Closer to Home project meetings which are continuing to take place fortnightly.
An analysis of Children Looked After data for 19/20 in comparison to 18/19 has been undertaken to help the service to understand any trends and identify priority areas of work around Children looked after.

- **Drop in supervision performance** Reported at 86%, now showing on insight at 91% due to late recordings on Trent from Managers.
- **Number of CP & CLA children without a care plan** - reported as 23 at the end of April. Care plans are now included in the weekly data meetings and monthly Head of Service/Senior Manager performance meetings. A new care and support plan went live in April, therefore some of the data is not available in the performance report this month around Care Plans. The service are working with BI to ensure it is correct.
- **Step downs** There were no step downs in April. There were plans for a number of children and young people to step-down but these have been delayed due for COVID-19. The Closer to Home Project meeting is addressing this and finding ways to overcome the barriers where possible.

Other Service Updates for the I&AB

Early Help

A piece of analysis work has been undertaken by the Early Help staff on 927 children that received direct work (not including group work) from the team during the last financial year. Of those 927 children only 64 children were referred back for statutory assessment. For 50 of these children the reason was that their families did not engage with Early Help. This evidences the efficacy of the work the Early Help team are undertaking alongside families.

Contacts to Front Door

The Front Door has seen an increase in the number of contacts and referrals being made in the last 2 weeks following an initial concerning quieter period when the schools closed. The Front Door reports that they are continuing to get progressively busier with an increase in Police and anonymous referrals. The Service has a contingency plan to cope with a further increase in demand and staff from Early Help have been trained and systems set up so they can assist the Front Door Team with contacts being made.

This increase in referrals coincides with a recent communications campaign that Children's Services undertook across the County. The campaign encouraged residents to report any concerns they had about children, young people and adults in their communities as well as highlight domestic abuse services. Flyers have been distributed to households by Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations alongside a social media campaign.

Priority children

Work is continuing to identify and support our high priority children and families. We are working closely with our colleagues in Education to increase participation in the Hubs and Social Workers are encouraging and supporting families to enable their children to attend. We are concerned that attendance of our priority children is very low and feedback from families is that they are fearful of sending their children due to COVID-19. We continue to work with

families to address barriers to attendance at the hubs and have committed to paying for meals at the hub for all our priority children who are not entitled to Free School Meals. There are currently 38 children registered and attendance varies with 23 children booked in for the week commencing 18th May.

Parent and Baby Placements

In response to a number of babies being born and the lack of available Parent and Baby assessment centre placements, Children's Services has developed an exciting new project within Powys. We have set up a community assessment centre for parents and their new-born babies, to enable us to undertake assessments of their care and support needs. Support workers are providing assistance, parenting guidance and practical support to the new parents and social workers are visiting regularly to complete assessments. By providing the service in house we are able to fully assess and support our parents and babies and the level of support required can be stepped up or down as needed. The property is also in our own County so families are being kept near or in their communities and not being moved out of county or out of Wales. This project was set up in response to COVID-19 however since our first parent and baby have moved in we can already see the many benefits and we will be monitoring and evaluating the project closely.

Placements & Closer to Home

Placement stability continues to be a priority for the service especially during this difficult time of uncertainty for all children and young people. As part of our COVID-19 business continuity planning Children's Services were able to temporarily secure a house within the County that could be used as an emergency placement for Children and Young People. Our Children's Commissioning Service worked tirelessly and in a very short period of time ensured the house was ready and on standby if required. This is an example of another innovative project that Children's Services have set up due to COVID-19 and is providing placements within our community. The house is being utilised. This has meant that we have been able to keep family members together safely in their communities with the support of our own Social Workers and Support Workers. This is another example of how, even in these times, we continue to 'work with' families rather than 'do to'.

Despite COVID-19, our work to deliver our Closer to Home strategy is continuing. The children's home in Ystradgynlais is progressing well and a recruitment drive for staff has taken place with appointments being made. Given the current situation we are in, the progress made has been excellent and highlights our commitment to our Closer to Home strategy.

Intervention & Prevention

The new Clinical Psychologist, in a joint project with PTHB and Powys Children's Services, started in post in April. The Clinical Psychologist will provide advice and support to our Intervention and Prevention teams on a generic and individual case by case basis. He will support our Edge of Care, Court, Through Care and Adoption Support work.

Mind of My Own

Work has taken place on the launch of the Mind of My Own app due to take place in May. The app will enable Young People to express their wishes and feelings which will support their engagement in their own care plans. This was postponed due to the COVID-19 response but we have worked with the company that runs the app to provide the training to staff virtually as we feel it is more important now than ever that Children and Young People have a voice and are provided with multiple ways of expressing their views.

Quality Assurance Work

The quality assurance work has been resumed in April by the Senior Manager for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. A quantitative audit was undertaken on open case files in Care and Support and Through Care teams and this has formed a programme of monthly audits with an immediate focus on care plans.