



Report of the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement

Meeting: Children's Services Scrutiny Board

Date: 17th September 2009

Subject: Quarter 1 Performance Report 2009-10

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

1. This report discusses the key performance issues considered to be of corporate significance identified for specific services related to Children's Services as at 30th June 2009. The issues discussed in this report have been identified because performance in these areas impacts upon one of the following, the delivery of our corporate priorities, performance against the National Indicator set which will be reflected in our CAA judgement or, the lack of assurance relating to data quality.

The performance issues highlight that the number of referrals which Children and Young People's Social Care are dealing with is 28% higher than a year ago and it is clear that staff are having to deal with a considerable increase in workload which is putting additional pressure on the performance of NI 59 and NI 60. This is in line with national trends.

The report also highlights areas where there are concerns as to the quality of data provided particularly in relation to the indicators which contribute to measuring the outcomes for Looked After Children.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the key areas of performance at the end of Quarter 1 (1st April – 30th June 2009).

2.0 Background Information

2.1 This 'highlight report' has been prepared in readiness for the Accountability process, which included the CLT meeting on 18th August, Leader Management Team on 20th August 2009 and the Scrutiny Boards in the September cycle.

2.2 The issues discussed in this report have been identified because performance in these areas impacts upon one of the following, the delivery of our corporate priorities, performance against the National Indicator set which will be reflected in our CAA judgement or the lack of assurance relating to data quality.

2.3 The overall CAA judgement includes a specific judgement on the performance of Children's Services. This judgement will be made using the new CAA Ofsted inspection framework, which was published on 13th May 2009. In summary, this includes judgments across three blocks:

Block A: Ofsted judgements on 'settings' including schools, nurseries, residential homes, etc.

Block B: New inspections – 'unannounced' on contact, referral and assessment and 'announced' on looking after children and safeguarding.

Block C: Performance against relevant indicators from the national indicator set.

With the above information Ofsted will judge Children's Services' overall performance. This judgement will then contribute to the wider CAA judgement.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 Children's Services Performance Issues

This report provides an overview of the performance of a number of Children's Services performance indicators at quarter 1.

Safeguarding

During this quarter, performance against 3 Children's Social Care indicators, NI 59, NI 60 and LSP- HW2b(i), declined and one indicator, NI 66, was noted as giving cause for concern. Whilst individual explanations of performance are provided, it is also important to look at these indicators collectively in order to understand the performance interdependencies between them.

NI 59 - Percentage of initial assessments within 7 working days of referral. The end of year result for 08/09 was 76.5%, however this fell to 68.7% in Q1 09/10. This fall in performance is a result of the increase in the number of referrals the service is now dealing with, which is 28% higher than a year ago. This surge reflects a

national trend in referrals. In addition to this, current audit work has identified a need for additional initial assessments to be undertaken and is creating further pressure on workloads.

As part of the transformation programme, a project is being undertaken with the Contact Centre and partner agencies to screen referrals to ensure children's needs are being handled by the right agency at the right time. The outcome of this project is likely to result in a significant drop in the number of inappropriate referrals to Children's Social Care enabling the service to spend more time on initial assessments for children that do meet the service's thresholds. A Social Care team manager is now based at the Contact Centre to implement this work. Initial findings of this project have resulted in the development of a triage system of a multi-agency team which is reporting to CSLT.

NI 60 - Percentage of core assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement. The end of year result for 08/09 was 83.3%, however in Q1 09/10 this fell to 79.4%. Once again this drop in performance is a result of the overall increase in referrals and staff having to respond to significantly larger workloads. The audit work will potentially increase this pressure further. The service is working to improve the quality of its core assessments by providing additional training and guidance to staff and by putting into place more robust quality assurance arrangements. In addition, the Business Process Re-engineering Team is working to streamline processes from end to end to support the effectiveness of service delivery.

NI 66 - Looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescales. Last year's result was 78.3% and the Q1 08/09 position is 89.0%. Whilst this is a significant improvement on 08/09 performance, the cumulative nature of this indicator means that once a review has been missed it cannot be recovered and therefore even at this stage in the year it is possible to predict that the year end target will not be met. The service is, however, striving to improve performance despite the recent increases in the number of looked after children. The service's restructure and revised processes will enable this improvement.

LSP - HW2bi - Number of looked after children. By the end of 08/09 there were 1,255 looked after children. In Q1 2009/10 this figure rose to 1,292 as 50 children were taken into care in May. Over the quarter, there was a net increase of 37 looked after children. The increase in the number of looked after children in Leeds mirrors a national trend. The high number of admissions in May triggered a detailed analysis of the reasons and thresholds around these admissions and the plans for the children involved. This work is ongoing and progress will be reported on a regular basis to Children Social Care's Senior Leadership Team and CSLT.

Increases in the number of looked after children has subsequent effects on the performance of other indicators as seen above and puts further pressure on the budget position of the service. It is therefore clear that effective management of the contact, referral and assessment process is essential to improving performance against these indicators. Since the end of quarter 1 there has been an unannounced inspection which has confirmed the need to improve referral and assessment processes and remedial actions are set out in the Referral and

Assessment Inspection Action Plan. An updated action plan can be provided if required.

Outcomes for looked after children

During this quarter, performance against 2 LAC outcome indicators, CYPP-P1-6 and CYPP-P1-7, relating to health needs assessments and dental checks, declined. Health needs assessments and dental checks were two of the issues highlighted as needing attention in the 2008 APA.

CYPP-P1-6 - Performance on up to date health needs assessment has seen a deterioration at quarter 1. Performance at the end of 08/09 was 84.1% whilst performance in Q1 09/10 was 79.2%. During Q2 the improvements have been made to address poor performance:

- Health staff being trained to input HNA data directly into ESCR. From September 2009, health staff will be expected to routinely input first HNAs within 2 weeks of assessment, which should improve data accuracy.
- LAC Health teams are now scheduling assessments without waiting for a trigger from Children Social Care which enables better planning.
- Pediatrician vacancies which prevented some HNAs being scheduled as planned during Q1, have now been resolved following recruitment.
- Children Social Care are undertaking some detailed analysis on a team and area basis to resolve data cleansing issues, identify any areas of poor performance and put action plans into place.

CYPP-P1-7 - In terms of dental checks, there has also been a downturn in performance at quarter 1. Performance at the end of 08/09 was 78.3 % whilst performance in Q1 09/10 was 67.1%. To address this, at their health needs assessment all children who have not seen a dentist within the last 6/12 months (under 5/ over 5) are referred to the Community Dental Service thereby assuring access to primary dental care. Recording of dental checks is also being improved to ensure a consistent approach is applied within teams. In addition, carers of adopted and fostered children will be reminded of their responsibility for appointments and attendance.

3.2 Data Quality

- 3.2.1 We are currently undertaking a review of the criteria used to inform the data quality judgements that are included in Accountability reports for each performance indicator. The process that we are using to drive these changes is the one that has been successfully adopted by our core city benchmarking partner, Sheffield City Council.
- 3.2.2 Our objective is to work closely with directorates and partners in order to adopt a more robust, consistent and over-arching approach that provides a wider based

data quality judgement. This will be an improvement on our current process which is mainly focused on completion of the data quality checklists alone.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 Effective performance management enables elected members and senior officers to be assured that the council is making adequate progress and provides a mechanism for them to challenge performance where appropriate. Effective performance management also forms a key element of the organisational assessment under the Comprehensive Area Assessment introduced in April 2009. The CAA examines and challenges of the robustness and effectiveness of our corporate performance management arrangements.

4.2 Our approach to performance management could improve policy making and decision making by making better use of the existing information in relation to the services the council provides either on its own or in partnership.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal or resource implications of this report.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 This report and the attached appendix highlights the key concerns in relation to Children's Services performance and data quality. As set out above the number of referrals which Children and Young People's Social Care are dealing with is 28% higher than a year ago and it is clear that staff are having to deal with a considerable increase in workload which is putting additional pressure on the performance of NI 59 and NI 60. In response to the unannounced inspection which confirmed the need to improve referral and assessment processes, remedial actions have been put in place and are set out in the Referral and Assessment Inspection Action Plan.

7.0 Recommendations

That the Children's Services Scrutiny Board note the Quarter 1 performance information and highlight any areas for further scrutiny.

Background Papers

- Leeds Strategic Plan
- Children and Young People's Plan (2009 – 2014)