

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:**           **JOINT EDUCATION AND YOUTH AND SOCIAL AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE:**                   **THURSDAY, 4 JUNE 2015**

**REPORT BY:**           **CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)**

**SUBJECT:**               **CORPORATE PARENTING, SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION**

**1.00    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01    To provide Joint Education and Youth and Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of activity and performance in relation to both corporate parenting and safeguarding/child protection.

This report covers the period commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to the current day.

**2.00    BACKGROUND**

2.01    The Children and Family Service have experienced an increase in demand at the front door of the service with a notable increase in the number of referrals being received. However, the response to this demand has been positive with timely and appropriate decision making being undertaken.

2.02    The establishment of the Children's Safeguarding Unit has been successful with strong performance sustained and/or improved throughout the year. A notable impact of the Unit has been the increased focus on quality and compliance which has resulted in improved quality of reports being presented to reviews and child protection meetings, along with increased compliance with processes and timescales.

2.03    The new Social Services operating model has now been implemented with all three Senior Managers and the Chief Officer having responsibility for aspects of Children's Services delivery.

2.04    Child Protection activity in relation to children on the Child Protection Register has fluctuated over the years and in 2013 there was a notable increase in the number of children placed on the Child Protection register. In 2014-15 there has however been a notable reverse in this trend with a gradual decline in activity.

### 3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

#### 3.01 CHILD PROTECTION

3.01.1 Child protection register activity in Flintshire for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 has seen a steady decline in the numbers of children placed on the Child Protection Register. In 2014/15 125 children were on the register against 203 in 2013/14. At the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 there were 75 children placed on the Register.

The length of time children are placed on the Child Protection Register has also seen a gradual decline

Period of time on register	No. on register at 31 March 2014	No. on register at 31 March 2015
		1
Number of children on the Register at year end who were on the register for less than 3 months	26	26
Number of children on the Register at year end who were on the register for more than 3 months but less than 6 months	48	30
Number of children on the Register at year end who were on the register for more than 6 months but less than 1 year	51	10
Number of children on the Register at year end who were on the register for more than 1 year but less than 2 years	8	9
Number of children on the Register at year end who were on the register for more than 2 years	0	0
<b>Total children</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>75</b>

There are a number of factors that can be attributed to the decline including:

- changes to the delivery of the duty and assessment team and associated with this improved decision making;
- increased co-ordination and targeting of interventions to families through the Public Law Outline processes;
- tracking and scrutiny arrangements between fieldwork services and the safeguarding unit;
- the limited number of high profile cases within the media.
- a national trend in the decline in the number of children being placed on the Child Protection Register.

The de-registration of children off the Child Protection Register has increased over the past twelve months from 128 in 2013-14 to 183 in 2014-15. The increase in de-registrations can be attributed to a number of factors including:

- children/ young people being taken into the care of the local authority;
- children/ young people subject to care proceedings;
- the impact of positive interventions with children and families reducing risk.

3.01.2 Performance in relation to Child Protection processes has been sustained and/or improved at a high level throughout the year as detailed below.

- i) The percentage of initial core group meetings due in the year which were held within 10 working days of the initial child protection conference – good performance sustained at 99%. Scrutiny from the safeguarding unit is ensuring core groups take place on time and are effective in monitoring the plan, ensuring recommendations are achieved and outcomes are met.
- ii) The percentage of initial child protection conferences due in the year which were held within 15 working days of the strategy discussion – improved from 89% in 2013-14 to 91% in 2014-15. Effective tracking between the safeguarding unit and fieldwork services are ensuring processes are adhered to.
- iii) 100% of children on the Child Protection Register have an allocated Social Worker

## 3.02 **SAFEGUARDING**

### 3.02.1 Regional arrangements

The North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board has now been established and is embedding itself effectively. The Board consists of strategic leads from all six North Wales local authorities; North Wales Police; BCUHB; Probation. The Board meets bi-monthly and its business includes: ensuring national and regional policy in relation to safeguarding is implemented; delivery of the Board's safeguarding priorities and the final endorsement of all Child Practice Reviews.

The infrastructure supporting the regional board comprises a number of sub-groups and delivery groups as follows:

- Sub-regional delivery groups (Anglesey and Gwynedd/ Conwy and Denbighshire/ Flintshire and Wrexham (chaired by Wrexham)) – the groups ensure there are robust and effective processes and practice in place to safeguard children and young people in the area; to implement local learning resulting from CPR's;
- Regional training and workforce group – is charged with developing and implementing a Regional Adult and Children Safeguarding workforce and training strategy (chaired by Flintshire);
- Communications group – is charged with ensuring public and professional awareness raising/ information sharing in relation

to safeguarding is disseminated effectively (chaired by North Wales Police)

- Child Practice Review group (chaired by third sector). The Child Practice Review (CPR) group operates on behalf of the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board to consider cases referred under the national CPR guidance and determines an appropriate response. The group is currently overseeing 12 Child Practice Reviews across North Wales, two of these being in Flintshire.

### 3.02.2 Corporate developments

The Flintshire County Council Improvement Plan for 2014/15 has a new Safeguarding priority included and is focussed on enhancing safeguarding arrangements across the Council. The priorities identified are as follows:

#### **1. Creation of a single Safeguarding Unit to manage safeguarding and protection processes for adults, young people and children.**

Achievements will be measured through

- Co-location of the Adults and Children's Safeguarding Units (by September 2015)
- Establishment of a new operating model for the Safeguarding Unit (by December 2015)

#### **2. Prepare for the new and additional safeguarding requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.**

Achievements will be measured through

- Establishment of a referral pathway for safeguarding concerns for adults and children/young people (by September 2015)
- Education and awareness raising of the broader definition of 'vulnerable adults' across the authority and with our partners (by March 2016)

#### **3. Establish wider ownership and governance of safeguarding across the authority.**

Achievements will be measured through

- Establishment of a Flintshire Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) panel to manage the risks of sexual exploitation of children in the County (by June 2015)
- Identification of opportunities for establishing safeguarding leads across the authority (by July 2015)
- Introduction of an annual safeguarding report (by October 2015)

### 3.02.3 Flintshire arrangements

A new Safeguarding Unit has now been established in Flint that has brought together the Children's and Adults Safeguarding teams into one co-located unit in Flint. The focus has initially been on bringing the teams together. Work is now underway to review the roles and responsibilities of individual post holders within the team and to appoint a dedicated Safeguarding Unit manager to oversee the work

of the Unit and to ensure the independent integrity of the work of the Unit.

Flintshire's Safeguarding Unit will also lead on the delivery of regional safeguarding requirements at a local level.

In August 2014 CSSIW undertook a national inspection of all local authorities with a focus on 'Safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours'. The Flintshire inspection was positive with a number of good practice areas identified in respect of: the discharge of corporate parenting responsibilities; quality of assessments supported by effective plans to meet needs; operational systems and procedures to ensure co-ordinated action and quality assurance arrangements.

### **3.03 CORPORATE PARENTING**

3.03.1 Elected members have a key role to play in ensuring that the local authority fulfils its responsibilities. Elected members have to have the knowledge and contact with officers and looked after children themselves to be able to ask the right questions and ultimately to influence policy.

In Flintshire Corporate Parenting responsibilities are discharged through a number of activities that take place throughout the year as follows:

- i. Bi-monthly Children's Services Forum – at the recent forum (May) four young people attended and actively contributed to the discussions.
- ii. Annual Climbie visits to visit Children's Social Services teams – the most recent visit was undertaken 11<sup>th</sup> May by Councillors Bernie Attridge, Chris Bithell and Christine Jones and supported by Chief Officers Ian Budd and Neil Ayling;
- iii. Elected member rota visits – the most recent visits have been undertaken to Bryntirion school;
- iv. Annual Pride of Flintshire event – scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> July;
- v. Regular Scrutiny reports;
- vi. Social Work activity delivered through all Social Work teams (CYAST in particular)

3.03.2 In March 2015 a new Participation Officer took up post within the service and is a key role in supporting and enabling children and young people to take an active role in the development and delivery of services within Flintshire.

### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 Scrutiny acknowledge the detail of the report and support the

developments that are underway in relation to the discharge of the Local Authority's safeguarding duties.

- 4.02 Scrutiny members acknowledge their responsibility as Corporate Parents and continue to promote positive outcomes for children and young people.

**5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.01 There are no immediate financial implications for Flintshire County Council. The Council has recognised in the recent past the need to resource this key area of service, when referrals have increased.

**6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

- 6.01 No impact resulting directly from this report

**7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- 7.01 No impact resulting directly from this report

**8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.01 No impact resulting directly from this report

**9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.01 The creation of a new Safeguarding Unit manager post will be created through a broader restructure of the whole Safeguarding Unit. Appropriate recruitment processes will be adhered to in the selection and appointment of a new postholder.

**10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

- 10.01 The child/ young person's voice is the foundation of all the work undertaken within the service and therefore continuous consultation takes place with the individuals supported through the service throughout involvement. A key element in enabling this is the conference buddy scheme that provides children and young people over the age of 10 with the opportunity to attend and participate in, (when appropriate) the Child Protection meetings.

- 10.02 Future developments of the Safeguarding Unit, including roles and responsibilities of individual postholders; remit of the new manager; changes to process and practice will be undertaken with the engagement and involvement of all staff in the Unit.

**11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

- 11.01 Prior to the co-location of the two safeguarding teams consultation

was undertaken with all members of staff in the two teams to inform the office moves and thinking in relation to development of the new combined unit.

- 11.02 Consultation has commenced with the Chief Officer Team with regards to the appointment of dedicated Safeguarding leads within Council portfolios.

**12.00 APPENDICES**

- 12.01 None

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985  
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.

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