

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 15 th September 2016
Report Subject	Children's Service Update to Include Repeat Referrals in Child Services
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer for Social Services
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A report was presented to Scrutiny in March 2016 outlining the key actions planned in response to the CSSIW inspection of Children's Services. These actions were summarised as:

- a) Implementing a revised structure with a focus on early intervention
- b) Developing our approach to assessment
- c) Taking measures to reduce re-referrals
- d) Implementing our quality assurance framework

This report provides Scrutiny with an overview of progress in these areas and confirmation that: a revised structure is now fully operational with an enhanced focus on early intervention; a new assessment framework has been developed; re-referrals are reducing; and our quality assurance framework is being taken forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Scrutiny Committee review the progress that is being delivered in response to the CSSIW inspection report, including progress in reducing and managing repeat referrals.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE CHILDRENS SERVICE UPDATE TO INCLUDE REPEAT REFERRALS IN CHILD SERVICES
1.01	Implementing a revised structure with a focus on early intervention
1.02	The revised structure is now fully operational. A structure chart is attached as Appendix 1. All management post have been recruited to apart from one Senior Practitioner post within the Permanence and Court Team. The post leads on court work which is a specialised area of work. No suitable candidate was identified through interview processes and the post will be re-advertised. The post is currently being covered through an interim Officer arrangement until a suitably experienced candidate can be recruited.
1.03	The structure was delivered without redundancy with one management post being redeployed into an appropriate post on the same grade. The structure will be reviewed early next year to ensure that it is efficient and delivering the intended outcomes.
1.04	The newly formed Targeted Support Team is supporting children and families through prevention and early intervention. The Team seeks to prevent children requiring formal statutory social services intervention and/or support children to step-down for formal services. The Team is very busy and has had an influx of work. There is currently a waiting list for access to support with systems in place to prioritise referrals. The demand for the service will be kept under review and analysed to establish a baseline of need and resource requirements.
1.05	The development of early intervention will be strengthened through proposals to develop an Early Intervention Hub commissioned through the Public Service Board. The Hub is a multiagency concept being developed with the Police, Health and Education and the voluntary sector. This service will in time provide the children and families of Flintshire a supportive option in allowing service users and their families more independence in seeking out their own support services by advocating more choice for our families and equally less statutory responsibility on the limited resources of the Local Authority.
1.06	Developing Our Approach to Assessment
1.07	A Single Assessment document has been developed. The Single Assessment is designed as a framework for Practitioners to undertake a proportionate assessment that assists families and staff in identifying the outcomes children and families want, the barriers to achieving these, and the support that can provided to promote the well-being and safety and children and young people. The document has been revised following a pilot across Teams and final recording guidance is being developed to accompany the tool.

1.08	Taking Measures to Reduce Re-referrals
1.09	The Duty and Assessment Team has now been renamed to the Children's First Contact Team (CFCT), which is Flintshire County Council's front door to children's statutory services provided by the Local Authority. The CFCT has the responsibility to triage all referrals and apply a risk analysis as to whether children are at risk of significant harm (child protection) or requiring some type of support services under the auspices of Child In Need services.
1.10	Referrals are received either electronically, by post or by telephone. The "front door" process of the CFC Team is to read and identify from each referral what intervention is required. This involves electronic data base checks to establish any previous or identical concerns and likewise any previous intervention already having been offered. Having gained this information a decision for checks with other agencies such as Health or Education are undertaken before a final decision is determined on the course of action to be implemented. Not all referrals require further action but are recorded on Flintshire County Council's data base as 'information only' with no further actioned required.
1.11	Between June 2015 and June 2016 – 3056 referrals and 2955 contacts were made to the CFCT. The largest referral source to Children's Services is via North Wales Police. As stated within the All Wales Child Protection Procedures all referrals received by the Local Authority require a decision to be made on each referral within a 24 hour period.
1.12	The re-referral rate for Wales into Children's Service for the past year was 22%. Flintshire's figure for the same period was 26.2% which has decreased to 20.2 % for the past year. It is worth noting that the reported repeat referral rate is of course dependent on what we define as a referral, and this has changed over the last few years, as informed by leading practice.
1.13	The Performance Indicator measures any referral that comes in on a case which has had a previous referral within 12 months, regardless of the action taken on the first referral, and regardless of the source of the referral (for example, if a referral is received from the police on a Monday and a referral about the same incident is received on the Tuesday, this would be counted as a repeat referral).
1.14	The original intention of the repeat referral Performance Indicator was to highlight cases which have come back because the work done first time round was insufficient. Welsh Government have come round to thinking that this is not a robust indicator (for the reasons above) and are moving to a new indicator which measures re-assessments; i.e. where an assessment is requested on a case which has previously been the subject of an assessment, from the same referrer. "Assessment" in this case means any referral which results in "advice or assistance" as defined in the 2014 Act, but excludes the 'information only' referrals which have previously skewed our figures.
1.15	Ideally, if the new performance indicator was to be measured as the Welsh Government suggests, then re-referrals would only present each time a new Social Work assessment was commenced.

1.16	As previously outlined the work of the Targeted Support Team, and the development of an Early Intervention Hub, will help to enhance our early intervention response and, in time, reduce re-referral rates.
1.17	Implementing Our Quality Assurance Framework
1.18	We have developed a quality assurance framework that draws together quantitative and qualitative information to provide an assessment of the quality and performance of our services. The framework includes the new measures prescribed by the national outcomes framework which includes issuing a prescribed questionnaire to all children and young people about their experience of social care. We have undertaken a pilot of this approach to help gain early insight into the experiences and views of children and young people. It had been intended that the responses would form part of our quarterly performance reporting. Welsh Government stipulate a written questionnaire must be used and unfortunately this format has generated 1 response from 46 questionnaires issued as part of the pilot. We will be reviewing how we improve response rates within the framework that has been set for us.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The proposed structure was delivered within the profiled staffing budget for the service. This budget profile incorporates agreed efficiencies of £132k for the service in 2016/17.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Comprehensive consultation on the new structure was undertaken with staff and Unions.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The operating structure was been designed to respond to the CSSIW inspection recommendations and to mitigate associated risks. The structure will be reviewed in February 2017 to ensure its objectives are being met.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Operating structure for Fieldwork and Resources services

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None:</p> <p>Contact Officer: Craig Macleod Telephone: 01352 701313 E-mail: craig.macleod@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales</p> <p>CSSIW has the powers to review Local Authority social services at a local and national level, to inform the public whether services are up to standard, to promote improvement of services and to help safeguard the interests of vulnerable people who use services and their carers. In May 2015 CSSIW undertook an inspection of Children’s Services in Flintshire. CSSIW made 12 recommendations for continued service development and improvement.</p>