

2019/20 Performance Overview: Children & Families' Directorate

The overall picture in Children's & Families Services indicates a decline in some areas of performance this year, the first decline after three years of steady achievement. The analysis indicates that there has been an increase in complexity of work that has not been sufficiently matched to skill capacity across the system. There is also some indication that the shared understandings of thresholds amongst partner agencies are not as strong as they have been in previous years, suggesting a revision of the training provision of the Safeguarding Board is required.

The performance of child protection planning has however returned to within the performance target range following a period of exponential increase linked to complexity and severity. The performance of Looked After Children (LAC) remains consistently very good year-on-year.

The engagement of families, children and young people has been sustained well in the 2019/20 year and should be noted as a significant achievement.

Several emerging themes have been identified in the analysis of 2019/20 year performance that warrant further inquiry. It has been recommended they go forward to the Safeguarding Children Board's work plan for the 2020/21 year.

The number of referrals over the year was 1,096. This is 166 over the expected range and a significant increase on last year, which was 200 lower. Whilst referral rates are often volatile, data from the previous three years show a steady downward trend. It may be that changes in agency personnel across all agencies now require a drive to re-establish thresholds for service.

Referrals

73% of referrals were transitioned to action at either the assessment or strategy meeting, and section 46 inquiry and child protection investigations, which is below the target of 80-85%. There was also an increase in re-referrals of up to 33% beyond target of 25% and above last year at 23%. This again indicates that confidence in the understanding of thresholds across the professional network is reducing.

93% of referrals are categorised as abuse and neglect, family stress and family dysfunction (categories of the Child in Need Census UK), which is consistent with the same last year. The ethnic origin of the child or young person is recorded to a high degree and show that the majority (66%) of referrals relate to families of Manx origin.

The police remain the biggest source of referrals representing 42% this year. Referrals from the public, friends' relatives, and families themselves continue at a steady rate of 22% for a third year. 15% are from schools and colleges and 10% from health with an increase specifically from GPs.

Re-referrals

Re-referrals at year end stood at 33%, back to levels seen in 2016. In recent years there had

been a steady decrease. More research is being undertaken to understand this trend further, which will be subject to an audit. At this stage, an early indicator suggests that confidence in the understanding of the thresholds across the professional service is reducing, as per referrals.

Timeliness of assessments

A high percentage indicates good performance. This year 67% of assessments were within the target timescales, falling short of the target range of 80-85% and below last year's achievement of 83%. This is a significant shift and accounted for in the complex needs area and not child protection. The significant impact of this is that some children and families have waited too long to know the outcome of any assessment and intervention. The process for complex needs is being reviewed to strengthen the response.

Child Protection Plans

A low rate is an indicator of good performance, but too low may indicate a lack of awareness or recognition. The overall performance rate for the year was 5.4 per thousand, just above the expected range of 3.8 – 5.2. The numbers have steadied after a period of an 18-month increase accounted for by an increase of complexity of cases. Over the course of the year 109 children were made the subject of child protection plans, and 119 plans ended. Of these cases, 60% children were under the age of 10, and 37% between 10 and 15 years. The main categories were neglect and emotional abuse and sexual and physical accounted for 4% each.

Child protection cases reviewed in timescales

A high percentage is an indicator of good performance. 79% of child protection conferences were held on time, which is below the 90-100% target. Following review, this decline is due to a capacity issue with secretaries for minuting the meetings. 75% of children and young people contributed to their conference which is lower than last year due to the prolonged absence of the children's rights champion.

Looked after Children

A low rate is an indicator of good performance. The overall number of looked after children at year-end was 92 and comfortably within the expected range of 90-106. This year 52 children became looked after and 37 ceased to be looked after over the course of the year.

The demographic of the LAC population shows an overrepresentation of older children with 21% over 16 years; 43% were under 10 and 36% were between the ages of 10 and 15. The placement status shows 75% in foster placements, or with family friends and relatives. The residential proportion remains static at 25%.

LAC reviewed in timescales

A high percentage is an indicator of good performance. 91% of reviews were in timescales, and 99% of children and young people eligible contributed to them which is excellent performance.

The plan for government has set KPIs, which are reported on as required. It should be noted that data sets are still being built for family placements, youth justice and early help and support.

There were 385 referrals made to Early Help and Support (EHAS), which was (28%) higher than KPI level at circa 300. This is a slight increase on the 348 referrals received by the team in the 2018/19 year. With a low re-referral rate and step up the professional network is confident both thresholds and outcomes are working well in this service. This is a demand-led service so can vary year on year.

Children with Complex Needs Reviews noted a decline in performance with only 51% of reviews completed on time, down from 77% in the 2018/19 year and well below the target range of 85-100%. This is an area of concern and requires improvement in 2020/21.

76% of Child/Parent Conferences (Initial Child Protection Conference and Child Protection Reviews) were completed on time, which is also below last year's achievement of 89% and the target of 90-100%. Following analysis, this has been accounted for as a consequence of capacity to serve the reviews in a timely manner without creating a backlog of secretarial work. Workload management is currently being monitored to respond to this.

Child contributions to the Child Protection process came in at 75% for the 2019/20 year, which is below target due to a prolonged absence of the children's rights champion. This has since been rectified.

Child protection inquiries

493 Section 46 inquiries were completed in the 2019/20 year, a high figure against the expected range of 200-250. Year-on-year analysis shows a slight increase from 2018/19 figures which stood at 472, also up from 329 in 2017/18.

19% of Section 46 inquiries resulted in a child protection conference, down on previous years and rates lower than the benchmark against the UK which stands at 38%. This low rate, however, does not follow through in respect of children made the subject of a child protection plan, which is above the UK average.

The number of children made subject of a plan was within the expected range, with the number of children being removed from a child protection plan exceeding those being started on one for the first time in three years, which is shown in the data below.

19/20		18/19		17/18	
Started	Removed	Started	Removed	Started	Removed
108	147	125	81	109	89
Year End:	90	Year End:	124	Year End:	93

Children with disabilities

There is a steady improvement in the occupancy and take up of services from the two respite resource centres for children with disabilities, following service redesign three years ago. This remains on target for full use at nearly 75%.