



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
REVIEW BOARD
9 September 2019**

ITEM 05

Report sponsor: Andy Smith, Strategic Director
People
Report author: Suanne Lim, Service Director Early
Help & Children's Social Care

Monitoring Safeguarding Practice

Purpose

- 1.1 A stable and competent workforce is the pre-requisite for safeguarding children and young people and driving forward improvements. Derby remains Ofsted rated 'Good' for its services and support to children and young people. This report provides an overview of recent workforce developments and safeguarding pressures.
- 1.2 The main workforce development has been a strategic review of 'front door' multi agency arrangements to make sure children and young people are appropriately safeguarded when risks are identified. This report provides detail of progress made against the recommendations of the Joint Targeted Agency Inspection (JTAI) undertaken in March 2019.
- 1.3 The main safeguarding pressure continues to be the increase in demand for services across all areas, which mirrors the national picture. This report provides detail of the performance monitoring arrangements in place to ensure robust oversight and a tight "grip" of practice at all levels.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the actions being taken to make improvements and challenge progress.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 To provide the Board with an overview of the effectiveness of safeguarding practice in the city.

Supporting information

- 4.1 Derby City Council has statutory duties to safeguard, protect and support vulnerable children and young people. The last single agency judgement inspection (Single Inspection Framework SIF) was undertaken in March 2017 by Ofsted which rated services for 'children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers' to be 'good' for overall effectiveness.

The new Ofsted ILACS framework was implemented in 2018 (Inspection of Local Authority Children Services) and Derby is scheduled for its next full judgement inspection in 2020.

- 4.2 Between 18 and 22 March 2019, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HMI Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and HMI Probation carried out a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Derby City. This inspection included a 'deep dive' focus on the response to child sexual abuse in the family environment. This joint targeted area inspection included an evaluation of the 'front door', which receives referrals about children who may be in need or at risk of significant harm. In Derby City, all enquiries or concerns about children are progressed through the local authority First Contact Team, which works alongside the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).
- 4.3 There was evidence of positive and safe practice found. In summary these were
- The MASH was considered to be effective and ensuring that where risk of harm is identified, child-focused responses follow, and children are safer.
 - The safeguarding board successfully engaging the local area in reviewing multi-agency responses to child sexual abuse. Committed partners proactively engaging in assurance and audit activity, which contributes to improvements in the provision of services to children and families.
 - The role of education partners in safeguarding practice was evidenced as being considerably strengthened, with reference to the implementation by the police of the 'Stopping domestic abuse together' initiative has improved information-sharing with schools and colleges.
 - Partners demonstrated working in a culture of learning and improvement.
- 4.4 However there were also improvements identified. In summary those for the Front Door were
- The quality of referrals to children's social care across the partnership was too variable. Not all partners were using the safeguarding referral form, and the variable quality of information shared hinders the first contact team in identifying risk and making fully informed decisions.
 - There were not enough qualified social workers in the first contact team to support complex discussions with parents about their protective capacity
 - Pathways to early help for children are not easily accessible for all agencies
 - The completion of assessments in children's social care takes too long

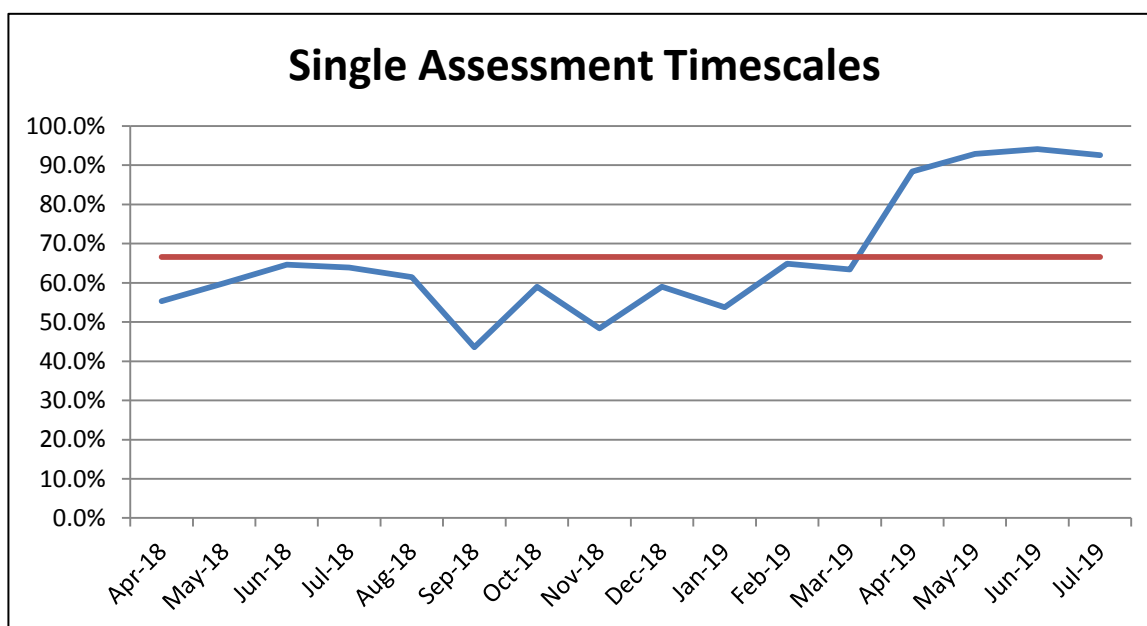
- 4.5 A local area improvement plan has been developed in response and progress is being monitored through a multi-agency Board chaired by the Strategic Director of People. The three significant improvement priorities are Front Door Arrangements, CSAFE (Child Sexual Abuse in Family Environment) and Leadership, management and partnership working. This report will focus on the Front Door element of the plan and progress made against the two sub actions, “safeguarding and referrals” and “decision making”.
- 4.6 The Front Door processes have been subject to strategic review since the inspection to redesign the multi-agency involvement in the first contact team. All partners have agreed the revised structure of co-location of staff or virtual access to critical information at the earliest opportunity. Social workers and early help advisors have been co-located, the Youth Offending Service has established a virtual arrangement and access to their client information system and health and probation service inclusion are pending but required by autumn 2019.

An electronic referral form was implemented in May 2019. This standardises the required information to enable the first contact team to make swift and informed decisions. Partners receive the outcome of referral and a copy of their submission. Monitoring procedures have been established to quantify the volume and quality of referrals through a fortnightly performance group.

The domestic abuse triage system is being reviewed and improvement has been made to the decision making processes to reduce unnecessary delay. This will be finalised in the autumn 2019.

The inconsistent child protection processes in locality social work team have been resolved through meeting with police and reviewing procedures. Inclusion by police will be maintained consistently through use of telephone conferencing.

Completion of single assessments has been a particular focus within social care and the below graph demonstrates improvement made. For July 2019, completion rate within timescale was 93%. The quality of assessments was audited in May 2019 with threshold decision making, social worker analysis of risk and protective factors, multi-agency information use, voice of the child and management oversight being particular strengths.



- 4.7 In respect of monitoring safeguarding practice there is a comprehensive programme of quality assurance. Since the March 2017 Ofsted inspection quarterly Quality Assurance Targeted audits and visits have been undertaken, both single agency and multi-agency. The last targeted visit undertaken with the “front door” services occurred on 12 August 2019 by the Strategic Director of People, Director of Early Help & Children’s Social Care, Head of Children’s Safeguarding and Deputy Head of Service for Reception. The purpose of the visit was to assure of decision making following contact and referral of safeguarding concerns which was successfully assured of. There were no concerns identified or raised during this audit. In addition, there are both monthly themed case audits undertaken by a pool of senior managers and also internal case audits undertaken within teams and services.
- 4.8 The governance arrangements for monitoring safeguarding practice is extensive and collectively as a system there is a robust and effective approach which is now firmly embedded. At the highest level, there is a monthly Assurance Safeguarding Meeting attended by the Chief Executive Officer of the Council and the Independent Chair of the Children’s Safeguarding Board that enables oversight and challenge of safeguarding matters at the highest level.
- Underneath, there is a monthly Children and Young People Improvement Board where the Strategic Director of People holds the Director of Early Help and Children’s Social Care and her heads of service to account. Audit reports are presented by the Head of Children’s Quality Assurance and improvements, where needed, are agreed and timescaled. An annual improvement plan guides the work of this Board and formal quarterly progress against actions are submitted by managers. Underneath this there are a number of performance groups that continually monitor and act upon intelligence and weekly performance reports to identify, address or escalate practice concerns as needed.
- The local authority also has to account and provide information as assurance to the Children’s Safeguarding Board and associated sub groups.

- 4.9 In respect of safeguarding pressures, all children's early help and social care services have experienced steady increase in demand over the past three years. This means that our practitioners, social workers and team managers have responsibility for a greater number of children. Derby prides itself on maintaining a zero tolerance to unallocated cases, though as referenced above, this means there are higher than national average caseloads in some parts the social care service.

March 2016 compared to July 2019:

- Early Help – **23% rise** (*from 989 to 1,221*).
- Children in Need – **7% rise** (*1,511 to 1,620*).
- Children with a child protection plan – **36% rise** (*311 to 423*).
- Looked after children and young people – **22% rise** (*460 to 563*).

Recruiting and retaining social workers continues to be a priority and Derby have had success in reducing agency social workers over the past 12 months to an all-time low of 12 (8% of social work establishment). There have been no agency social work managers of any teams or agency social workers within children in care services for over three years.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 There is an ongoing programme of engagement with social work staff and managers to ensure a direct line of sight and communication between senior managers and the front line.

Other options

- 6.1 There is openness to exploring all options to improve safeguarding practice.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 For 2017/18 the agency social worker expenditure was £2m
For 2018/19 the agency social worker expenditure was £1.5m
For 2019/20 it is estimated that agency social worker expenditure will be 900k

Legal implications

- 8.1 Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to provide sufficient social workers to act as key workers to children in care, children subject to child protection plans and to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and to assess children in need.

Other significant implications

- 9.1 None identified.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu HOS Legal Services	
Finance	Alison Parkin HOS Finance	
Service Director(s)	Suanne Lim, Service Director Early Help & Children's Social Care	
Report sponsor	Andy Smith Strategic Director of People	19/08/19
Other(s)	Judith Russ Head of Children's Safeguarding	