

Report of: Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee	9 November 2015	B2	All
Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt	

**SUBJECT: Safeguarding Islington's Children:
Child Protection Annual Report**

1. Synopsis

This report provides an update to the Committee on the progress being made in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Islington's most vulnerable children.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Committee scrutinise the headline performance outcomes;
- 2.2. That the Committee scrutinise the governance arrangements for safeguarding children;
- 2.3. That the Committee scrutinise the findings of quality assurance activities.

3. Background

- 3.1. The welfare of Islington's vulnerable children is rightly one of the Council's highest priorities. Islington Children's Social Care (CSC) is currently working with 895 children in need, 381 children who are looked after of which 8 are disabled children and 64 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). We have 513 care leavers and 151 children with child protection plans. The majority of child protection plans are because of emotional abuse or neglect. Characteristics of parents whose children have child protection plans include domestic violence (33%), substance misuse (15%) and mental health problems (24%).

4. Governance Arrangements

- 4.1. The governance and scrutiny of the arrangements for safeguarding children take place through this Committee and the following inter-agency fora:
- 4.2. **Safeguarding Accountability Meetings** chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Children and Families, Corporate Director of Children's Services,

Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board and Director of Targeted and Specialist Children and Families. The meeting is held eight weekly and allows senior members to hold senior officers and the chair of the Board to account, to scrutinise performance related to vulnerable children, to be appraised of any concerns about the safety and welfare of children and to drive improvement.

- 4.3. **Corporate Parenting Board**, chaired by the Executive Member for Children and Families and attended by four elected members, senior officers and representatives of the In Care Council. The Board meets eight weekly and scrutinises performance and strategic planning related to children in care and care leavers, sets direction and drives improvement.
- 4.4 During the year there has been a great deal of media attention about missing children, and those at risk of sexual exploitation (CSE). The Corporate Parenting Board has particularly looked at this issue, and received detailed reports about the reasons that children run away from care. During 2014/15, 35 children went missing from care on 128 occasions. Fifteen of those children had become looked after within the year, and all were aged 14-17.
- 4.5 As of 31 March 2015, of the 35 children and young people missing from care, 21 have achieved some stability, 4 have returned home and 4 have left care, 1 was in secure accommodation. Twelve of the 17 at risk of CSE are no longer at risk. The other predominant reason for going missing is related to offending and gang association, all were young men. Many of these young people came into care later with very complex needs and despite intensive support some have not achieved good outcomes.
- 4.6 All children who run away have a safe and well check from the police and a return home interview (RHI) from a youth worker in our Targeted Youth Support Service (TYS). The RHI explores the reasons that the young person went missing and seeks to ensure that the problems are resolved to prevent further episodes. This service was introduced during 2014 and YYS was able to conduct 19 return home interviews for children looked after (CLA). Some children refused to be seen and our success in securing their compliance needs to improve so that all children can benefit from this service. The main reason given for going missing was to be with family and friends or partners. Other reasons were being unhappy with placements due to money restrictions or boundaries. Two girls were adamant that they were not missing but with boyfriends, family or friends and their carers were aware of this.
- 4.7 The Children Looked After (CLA) service response to missing children is robust. Over the last year they have applied successfully for 9 recovery orders, 2 collection orders and 4 secure orders in order to remove children from risky situations or people. Abduction notices are served by the police on adults that knowingly harbour our missing children.
- 4.8 During 2014/15, 35 children were reported as missing from home on 77 occasions. It is thought this is an under representation of the true number. All those reported missing have a safe and well check from the police and a return home interview (RHI) offered by the Targeted Youth Support Service.
- 4.9 Boys aged 16-18 were at highest risk of going missing from home and girls aged 13-15 were second highest. YYS completed 72 RHI for those missing from home and found that 70% of children were already actively involved with a range of existing services. Concerns were identified about CSE in 20 cases, in 18 of these the CSE risks were already being addressed by workers. In seven cases there were concerns about gangs noted from the RHI.
- 4.10 **Islington Safeguarding Children Board (ISCB)** is chaired by an independent chair, the Board meets eight weekly. This is a statutory body responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of inter-agency safeguarding and the co-operation of partners. The Board has sub-committees which drive and co-ordinate quality assurance, policy and practice, training, Serious Case Reviews and the Child Death Overview Committee which reviews all the cases of children who die through natural causes or accidents to evaluate whether improvements to practice would reduce future tragedies.
- 4.11 ISCB agrees local priorities and monitors actions taken to implement them. The Board completed two serious case reviews during the year.
- 4.12 The Independent Chair of the ISCB reported in his annual report that 'the work of the Board has become mature in recent years and has taken the steps of formulating objectives which challenge partners to

focus on the advanced work that is required by professionals to help children undo the harms caused by abuse and neglect.....the Board has made in roads to identify children at risk of CSE but is now pushing partners to identify and prosecute those offenders who exploit and abuse.' The annual report evaluates the effectiveness of child protection in Islington and has set the following priorities for the next three years: To improve the collective effectiveness of agencies in:

- 1) Addressing the impact of neglect on children, including by helping them to become more resilient.
- 2) Addressing the consequences / harm suffered as a result of domestic violence, parental mental health and substance abuse.
- 3) Identification of children who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and holding perpetrators to account.

The Annual Report of the ISCB will be presented to the Committee in January 2016.

5. Performance Management and Quality Assurance

- 5.1. In order to ensure that Islington's most vulnerable children are safe and that our services continuously improve, Children's Services employ a range of quality assurance measures to test the 'health' of our services and to learn lessons about how to improve.
- 5.2. Through performance management we are able to use key performance indicators as a 'proxy' measure for quality of service and to support service improvement. Caution needs to be exercised in relying on performance indicators in isolation however, as it is possible to have good performance but poor quality of service; although conversely it is unlikely that there could be good quality of service and poor performance. Therefore to ensure that there is a comprehensive understanding of the quality of service both quantitative and qualitative information must be reviewed. From monitoring key performance indicators we are able to identify that:
 - 5.3.
 - All children who have child protection plans are visited every two weeks (where this is part of the plan);
 - All children who have child protection plans have a core group of professionals who have prescribed tasks in respect of their involvement with the child;
 - All children who have child protection plans have their plan reviewed after three months and six monthly thereafter;
 - All children who have an allocated social worker have a plan that sets out the actions required to improve their outcomes;
 - All children newly allocated to a social worker are seen within 10 days (sooner if needed);
 - All looked after children are seen at four weekly intervals unless the Independent Reviewing Officer agrees alternative arrangements;
 - All children in care cases are independently reviewed every six months;
 - Social Work case loads are reasonable with the average being 9 - 22 children per worker for Children in Need and 10 children per worker for Children Looked After.

6. Headline Performance 2014/15 (see Appendix A)

- 6.1.
 - We receive 1,000 contacts regarding concern about children per month, most come from the police, closely followed by schools;
 - Most contacts are about domestic violence, parenting capacity and child criminal behaviour;
 - We have the 11th highest rate of assessed Children in Need in the country;
 - 84% of our children in need assessments are carried out within 45 days;
 - We have a similar number of children per 10,000 with child protection plans as statistical neighbours (SN) currently 151;
 - We carry out more child protection enquiries than SN;
 - Repeat child protection plans comparable with SN;
 - Children do not have child protection plans for too long and their child protection issues were

resolved within short timescales;

- We apply to court for orders to protect children more often than most other boroughs;
- The number of children subject to court orders is stable;
- Islington has more children looked after per 10,000 than SN (381);
- The number of Looked After children who had to move more than three times during a year is comparable with SN;
- The long term placement stability of Looked After children is stable;
- More children 16+ are becoming looked after, and more 11 -15 year olds are becoming looked after;
- There are more Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (64);
- More young people are remaining with their foster carers after their 18th birthday;
- Placements for children looked after are becoming much more difficult to find, there is a national shortage of foster homes and significant challenges of supply within the children's homes sector;
- For the first time in six years we have started using secure orders to protect children from absconding and harm.

- 6.2. To assure the quality of our safeguarding services we routinely review qualitative information alongside performance data through our Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). This provides a consistent set of minimum practice standards, to measure practice and identify patterns across the service, within a team and/or in relation to an individual's performance.
- 6.3. Each quarter managers undertake observations of practice and audits of case files, the findings of the audits are judged against the Ofsted inspection framework and practitioners are given feedback about how their practice can improve.
- 6.4. **The following gives examples of findings that have been used to improve practice:**
- 6.5. **Early intervention and assessment** – In 86% of cases auditors found that at the point of contact the thresholds were appropriately applied and that the response was proportionate to the concerns raised. The majority (93%) of referrals were responded to within the required seven working days. In over half of the cases (58%) the auditors found no record that the referrer had been notified about the course of action agreed. In almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of cases the child was talked to alone whilst the assessment was carried out and there is evidence that they were listened to and their experiences taken into account in 90% of cases. Relevant parties such as extended family members or agencies were readily consulted in 90%. The changes necessary for the child not to be in need or at risk of harm were clearly recorded and the actions and decisions were clear and up to date in 90% of cases.
- 6.6. **Strategy discussion/meeting (a meeting called to discuss whether the child is at risk of significant harm)** – In $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cases reviewed a strategy discussion to consider significant harm appeared to have been necessary. Sixteen of the seventeen were held at the appropriate level of seniority, there was evidence of management oversight and a child protection conference was convened when required (94%). For cases that progressed to conference, there was evidence of a clear picture of the risks to the child (94%). In 85% of cases the outline plan was considered to clearly state the actions agreed to reduce the risk of harm. However, in 3 out of the 17 cases looked at, auditors found that the outline plan was not sufficiently clear.
- 6.7. **Child In Need Intervention** – The audit found that the children are being visited regularly (89%) and that in 4/5 cases the visits are frequent enough to allow the worker to build a meaningful relationship with them. Although the auditors found evidence that in 67% of cases the recording was dynamic and captured change, they found that in over half of the cases (56%) changes in the child's circumstances is not captured in the chronology and thus the tool was not used to analyse the child's experience over time.
- 6.8. **Child Protection plans** – Most of the child protection plans were deemed to capture the concerns for the child (94%). Over three-quarters (78%) evidenced how the child will be safe and have their needs met. In all but one of the 16 cases reviewed, the concerns were clearly stated and the actions were linked to the risks and needs identified. Furthermore, most plans evidenced what the family and the case worker were going to do to help achieve change.

- 6.9. **Multi-agency working arrangements** – Three quarters (74%) of the cases showed evidence that the team around the child meetings are attended by key people and in almost all (90%) the sharing of information was used effectively for planning and risk-based decision making.
- 6.10. **Overall service provision** – In most cases there is evidence that the children (75%) and parents (88%) were heard and that their wishes and feelings influenced the help provided and that their concerns/issues were responded to. There was strong evidence that the parents and the child (94%) were involved in the planning of the help they were provided and that the children are currently safe and actions have been taken to protect them (90%). In most cases there was recorded evidence of the difference Children's Social Care is making in helping to improve the child's life.

7. **Observation of supervision**

- 7.1. The findings show that overall the supervision sessions observed met service standards. Quality of supervision delivery – 87% of the sessions observed were well organised and there was evidence that both participants worked well together to achieve their objectives (86%). Auditors found that supervisors used skills to promote reflection and analysis (82%) and that they also used their experience and expertise to inform case discussion (87%). Furthermore, in three-quarters (73%) of the sessions observed, the supervisor took time to acknowledge the personal impact of cases on the supervisee and support the worker in containing anxiety and discuss professional development. Review of the auditors' comments showed that social workers raised anxiety with regards to managing risks to the child as well as their workloads, in particular in being able to meet timescales. One commented on the challenges of partnership working, including communication and tensions that arise from differences of opinions. There is evidence that supervisors were able to reassure their staff and help them prioritise tasks. A number of auditors commented that the records did not adequately capture the discussions they observed during the supervision session.
- 7.2. **Quality of case discussion** – The quality of analysis of the child's risks and needs was rated very highly (94%) and the plan for managing those risks was considered to be proportionate (88%). Ten of the auditors commented on the direct work discussed during the session. Whilst (82%) sessions observed found that actions from previous sessions and the child's or family's plan were reviewed, the auditors found that actions from child protection conferences, children looked after reviews, team around the child or team around the family meetings were reviewed in only 33% of cases. This figure has remained constant for the past two quarters. Moreover, most case records reviewed contained an outline of the presenting issues (88%); a review of outcomes from previous decisions and actions (78%) and a course of action agreed on key decisions (87%). The rationale for why key decisions were made was recorded in almost two-thirds of the cases reviewed as was any dissent about the course of action taken (63%). Auditors found evidence of the use of chronologies as a tool to help inform case discussions in less than (60%) of the observations carried out.
- 7.3. **Direct observations of practice in Children's Social Care and Families First**
- 7.4. Auditors reported that overall the home visits observed were carried out to a good standard. The question that scored the lowest was the exploration of the home environment where only about half (54%) of the practitioners were observed to carry this out. In five cases the observation was carried out not at a home visit but at a meeting either in the office or another venue. Where the home was explored, there was evidence that social workers did so purposefully to address safety issues and assess living arrangements by seeing the bedrooms. In one case the auditor thought the looking around could have been handled more tactfully and the worker should have explained to the family why it was necessary. Auditors observed direct work take place in over 2/3 of the visits and a few commented on seeing practitioners apply solution-focused or 'Motivational Interviewing' skills in their interaction with either the child or the parent. In one case there was preparation work prior to the visit.
- 7.5. In summary a total of 109 case files were reviewed across the division in this period. The findings of the broad review of practice highlight widespread examples of good and outstanding practice. However, the findings also show that there are areas for improvement in both the interface with service users and partner agencies and in the internal operational management of practice. These findings are fed back to staff to

support the journey of continual improvement and an action plan is created to ensure that the areas for development are addressed.

- 7.6. Although the parent feedback represented only a small sample, they voiced strong views on maintaining one social worker throughout their journey through services and served as a reminder that the importance of continuity in human relationships should not be overlooked.

8. Innovation

- 8.1. Islington has been awarded two grants for Innovation by the DfE; one for the Pause Programme and one to transform social work practice which we have called Doing What Counts and Measuring What Matters.

8.2. Pause

- 8.3. The Pause Programme provides intensive, integrated support to women who have more than one child in care. Women in this situation have almost always had very hard lives themselves, often starting with abuse in childhood, and including many issues in adulthood such as domestic violence, mental health issues, and substance misuse. Pause aims to break this cycle by intervening at a point when the women have no children in their care, using reversible long acting hormonal contraception to create a space in which women are supported to reflect and develop new skills and responses.

- 8.4. 50 women were identified in Islington who had 2+ children (207 in total) removed during the research period November 2009 – November 2014. Of our Islington cohort, 84% experience domestic violence; substance misuse is prevalent (52% cannabis, 44% class A drugs); 66% have mental health issues; 46% abuse alcohol; 20% have learning difficulties; 24% are known to the criminal justice system; 24% are sex workers; 18% are care leavers; 18% have a personality disorder.

- 8.5. The project will run with DfE funding for one year and then become self funding from savings made through reducing the number of children in care.

8.6. Doing What Counts and Measuring What Matters

- 8.7. The DfE has granted £3m to children's social care to transform services to improve outcomes for children including ensuring more of them can safely remain with their families rather than enter the care system.
- 8.8. Islington and the University of Bedfordshire have created a new model of social work practice called Motivational Social Work, building on a randomised control trial using Motivational Interviewing carried out by Bedfordshire in Islington in 2013.
- 8.9. The model of practice aims to ensure that social workers practice is not skewed by counting their inputs e.g. how long it takes to do an assessment, but rather they can be measured on their outcomes e.g. the quality of their observed practice and the goals achieved by the family.
- 8.10. This transformational work is one of nine projects nationally that aim to create systemic change in children's social care.
- 8.11. It has enabled Islington to attract more social workers and to reduce caseloads so that they can undertake more direct work with children and their families. Para-professionals have been recruited to support social workers to reduce bureaucracy associated with their role, IT systems have been adapted to reduce duplicate recording and tablets have been provided to support remote working.
- 8.12. The University of Bedfordshire has provided embedded 'practice evaluators' who observe the practice and score the practitioners fidelity to the model, which enables improved relationships with families and hence greater likelihood of keeping children safe. The practice evaluators collect information from the children and families about their experience of the social work and this feedback is provided to the social worker in feedback sessions.

- 8.13. The next phase of the programme introduces co located mental health professionals (both adult and child) who will work alongside the social worker to jointly provide assessments and treatment in more complex cases with the aim of keeping more children within their families, avoiding court proceedings and the need for children to be in the care of the local authority.
- 8.14. The model aims to become self sustaining through reinvesting the savings achieved through reducing the number of children in care to continue the model of reduced social work caseloads which provides greater capacity for relational work with children.

9. Implications

9.1. Financial Implications:

- 9.2. All of the measures described in this report can be implemented within existing budgets.

9.3. Legal Implications:

- 9.4. The Council has a duty to investigate where it has reasonable cause to suspect that a child in the area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, and to take appropriate action (section 47 Children Act 1989). This includes a new Local Children Safeguarding Board (LCSB) power to request any person or body to supply such information as is specified in the request (Children, Schools and Families Act 2010 (Commencement No. 3) Order 2013).

- 9.5. The Children Act 2004 introduced the requirement for the Council to set up a LSCB to co-ordinate, and ensure the effectiveness of, partner agency services for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Islington (Sections 13 and 14).

- 9.6. The Council must have regard to the revised statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children, which came into force in April 2015.

9.7. Environmental Implications:

None.

9.8. Resident Impact Assessment:

- 9.9. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The Council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

- 9.10. A very high proportion of vulnerable children known to children's social care live in workless households. All social care interventions aim to address the needs of the whole family which include maximising benefits and supporting routes into employment, education and training.

10. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1. The Council rightly places a high priority on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable children in Islington. This report provides assurance about the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding and looked after children's services provided through a range of performance and quality assurance measures that are in place to ensure that services to Islington's most vulnerable children are as safe as they can be.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Cathy Blair
Interim Corporate Director Children's Services

Date 25.10.2015

Received by:

Head of Democratic Services

Date 27.10.2015

Appendices:

Appendix A: Headline performance data

Background papers:

None.

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APPENDIX A

KEY DATA 2007-2015

	2007 (31/03/07)		2008 (31/03/08)		2009 (31/03/09)		2010 (31/03/10)		2011 (31/03/11)		2012 (31/03/12)		2013 (31/03/13)		2014 (31/03/14)		2015 (31/03/15)		YTD	Based on LBI data
	LBI Return	DCSF	LBI Return	DCSF	LBI Return	DCSF	LBI Return	DfE	LBI Return	DfE	LBI Return	DfE	LBI Return	DfE	LBI Return	DfE	LBI Return	DfE	LBI	
No. CIN (those with open ref at 31 March) inc CP & CLA							1834		1778		1772		2011		2038		1530		1425	
Number subject to a CPP	112	110	111	110	138	140	132	132	112	112	141	141	117	117	137		171		155	
Number CLA	364	365	332	330	307	305	316	315	324	325	329	330	310	310	307	305	352		368	
CLA (not UASC)	307	310	290	290	272	270	284	285	295	295	296	295	283	285	280		308		311	
CLA (UASC)	57	55	42	40	35	35	32	30	29	30	33	35	27	25	27		44		57	
Contacts	14933		12667		9940		11183		12700		12505		11688		11730		11766		5498	
Referrals (inc. re-ref)	2100	2100	2545	2545	2263	2265	2571	2571	2404	2404	2430	2430	2576	2576	2776		2450		890	
Re-referrals	293	295	408	410	373	375	452	452	500	496	475	418	465	466	575		445		133	
Private Fostering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	
Missing From Care (Incidents)																	188	-	140	
Missing From Care (Children)																	46	-	46	
Initial Assessments (numbers)	1497	1495	2082	2080	2013	2015	2319	2319	2146	2146	1874	NA*	753							
Core Assessments (numbers)	909	910	1502	1500	1349	1350	1149	1149	1079	1080	1171	NA*	714							
Single Assessments (numbers)												NA	1462	NA	2834		2822		1284	
Number of Section 47's	295	295	543	545	482	480	413	413	369	369	457	457	383	383	489		639		218	
Initial Conferences	149	150	186	185	168	170	151	151	167	176	163	163	164	164	210		197		79	
Number becoming subject to a CPP in the year	132	130	141	140	154	155	131	131	148	148	149	149	134	134	179		186		62	
No. subject to a CPP for a second / subsequent time	18	20	16	15	24	25	19	19	23	23	19	19	14	14	36		27		3	
No. of CPP ceasing after 2 or more years	11	10	2	-	3	x	4	x	5	x	3	x	9	9	9		5		1	
Contacts - % progressing to referral							23%		19%		19%		22%		24%		20%		19%	
% of children who had more than one ref in financial yr							9.1%	9.1%	11.1%	NA	11%	NA	8.7%	NA	10.5%		7.3%		7.4%	
Initial Assessments (within 7/10 days %)	65%	65%	81%	81%	86%	86%	85.3%	85.3%	82.8%	82.8%	96.5%	NA*								
Core Assessments (within 35 days %)	67%	67.6%	75.4%	75.0%	88.3%	88%	86.8%	86.8%	83.4%	83.4%	86.8%	NA*								
Single Assessments (within 45 working days)													67.0%		68.2%		84.2%		83.4%	
% subject to a CPP for a second / subsequent time							14.5%	14.5%	15.5%	15.5%	12.8%	12.8%	10.4%	10.4%	20.1%		14.4%		18.3%	
% of CPP ceasing after 2 or more years							2.9%		3.0%	x	2.5%	x	5.7%	5.7%	5.7%		3.3%		0.4%	
CPP per 10,000											41	38.8	32	31.9	37		45			
CLA per 10,000			99		92		94		94		96	91	84	84	84	81				
Single Assessments per 10,000												NA	104	NA	772					
Population													36,700	36,700	38,000	36,700	36,701			

x = Any number between 1 and 5 inclusive has been suppressed and replaced by x (DfE, formerly DCSF)

Please note, statistics published by the DfE (previously DCSF) are included in this table as they sometimes differ to the figures submitted by the council in the annual SSDA 903 and CIN returns and their precedents.

The population number used in the 2012-13 and 2013-14 rate per 10,000 figures is 36,700. This is the mid-year 2012 (Projection) based on the 2011 census used by the DfE and released in October 2013.