



SCRUTINY PANEL

Performance Report and Analysis September 2022

Petra Pankova
Practice, Performance and Inspection Readiness



A city of opportunity where everyone thrives

Priority Areas

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Effective assessment and intervention	4	Medium
Purposeful Direct Contact	5	Medium
Management Support for better practice	6	High
Right service at the right time	7	High
Robust corporate parenting	9	High
Rigorous quality assurance	12	Medium
Performance Culture	13	High

Practice and Performance Overview

As we approach the Autumn it certainly feels like the service has stepped up to meet a range of challenges that we faced over the Summer. Nationally, the lack of availability of registered care placements is a huge challenge and it has been a particularly tough period in this regard. Teams have come together to provide wrap-around support to support placements and to keep children with their families. Some children have experienced disruption and unplanned moves, but overall, the number of looked after children is stable and slowly reducing (albeit still at a comparatively high level).

Throughout July and August new staff starters have continued to join the service and we anticipate that we will be in the position to carefully start letting a number of agency staff go from the end of October. Our practice development team has mobilised to support the large number of newly qualified social workers in the service with a comprehensive induction and ASYE programmes. SLT is midway through systemic leadership training and the next phase, for operational managers, is about to begin. This training is critical in developing staff confidence and effectiveness, setting the right culture across the service and galvanising us as a team. We will be celebrating our looked after children in our second annual 'Love our Children' week at the end of September and will be engaging with partners during three locality launch events in October.

Our audit programme for the coming 12 months is focused on gaining a more accurate and wider view of the quality of practice across the service. We are strengthening the 'learning loop', embedding learning from quality assurance activity and known areas for development into practice improvement. Audit completion still needs to improve, but is increasing. Attendance at practice forums is good and improving each session; over 70 colleagues attended the last 'Making the Difference' practice forum.

Priorities for performance analysis and improvement are: visits to looked after children, timeframes for initial child protection conferences and in October we will also progress with plans to work with Hertfordshire to introduce a Family Safeguarding Model. Our main areas of focus as we approach the Autumn are:

- Balancing the need to reduce spend with ensuring manageable caseloads and making good decisions about children
- Rigorously progressing plans for children, especially reunification
- Building the skills and confidence of a largely inexperienced workforce
- Reducing demand by supporting families at the lowest possible point.
- Increasing placement sufficiency
- Locality focus

Our partners will notice an upwards gear shift in all of these areas, alongside a sharper focus on the quality of practice, led by our Principal Social Worker. We need our partners to support us in focusing relentlessly on these priorities and ensuring that we have an honest, accurate picture of our collective practice.



Steph Murray
Deputy Director - Children's Social Care



Indicator	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Target	Southampton 20/21	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
Percentage of re-referrals within 12 months	27% (103/375)	27% (87/322)	28% (91/315)	28% (91/323)	21% (59/272)	21% (84/382)	26% (91/343)	28% (99/344)	30% (91/298)	23%	22%	28%	23%	N/A
Number of Early Help assessments completed	195	200	101	131	106	126	145	162	99	TBC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rates of Single Assessments completed per 10,000	496	540	595	653	64	119	176	232	302	700	672	637	554	518
Percentage of C&F assessments completed within 45 working days	88% (291/329)	91% (290/317)	95% (287/300)	90% (291/321)	79% (263/332)	81% (233/286)	86% (256/295)	71% (208/290)	78% (286/366)	90%	77%	74%	70%	69%

Analysis

Re-referrals continued to rise in July and August 2022 above target and from a lower figure in April and May. Performance regarding Children & Families Assessment timeliness dropped in July to 71% and improved with 78% in August. It is still some way off Southampton target of 90%. We also know that in the last six months 60% of cases were closed after assessment was completed with no further action – needs or risks meeting statutory duty levels were not identified (source: Inspection of Local Authorities Children’s Service Annex A data set for August 2022)

Volume of completed Early Help Assessments dropped by 39% in August compared to July and by 31% compared to June 2022.

Action/next steps

Planned referral and re-referral audit and dip sampling at the Children’s Resource Service (CRS) are ongoing and led by the HoS for this area to look at application of threshold at a point of entry and when decisions to close/ step cases down are made. The focus of scrutiny is on CRS decision making, quality of accepted referrals, appropriateness of referrals from partners and interface with Early Help, in the coming months.

Indicator	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Target	Southampton 20/21	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
Percentage of children subject to Child Protection Plan for whom a visit has taken place within last 2 weeks (10 Working Days)	88% (398/448)	79% (362/457)	70% (347/490)	80% (390/487)	91% (416/454)	86% (365/424)	86% (357/414)	83% (313/377)	79% (294/368)	90%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of children subject to Child Protection Plan for whom a visit has taken place within last 4 weeks (20 Working Days)	97% (437/448)	98% (449/457)	86% (424/490)	90% (439/487)	97% (443/454)	97% (412/424)	98% (406/414)	95% (359/377)	97% (358/368)	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weeks or less visits)	81% (446/547)	83% (455/548)	74% (418/561)	80% (456/563)	84% (479/566)	81% (457/560)	85% (473/555)	83% (465/555)	75% (416/552)	100%	TBC	97%	53%	67%

Analysis

The local authority had an eye on average of 83% and 79% of children with child protection plans with visiting frequency of no more than 10 working days in July, and August respectively. 83% (July) and 75% (August) of children in care were seen within the up to six weeks frequency. Compliance with visiting frequency for both groups of children has decreased in the last two months against June 2022 and some previous months since December 2021. The decreased trend over the last two months has been attributed by managers to summer holidays - children and families not available for visits, workforce capacity to undertake visits, workforce stability and the high level of demand on the service.

Action/next steps

Assurance clinics are supporting the focus on improving performance in this area and services are encouraged to adopt a forward planning approach to how visits are scheduled. Revised practice standards were launched in practice week in June 2022, stating the expectations around visiting children and recording on children's files. Capacity within the service has been impacted by staff turnover and is a particular risk in this area. From September case holding capacity should increase as new practitioners are joining Southampton. We are also seeing a decrease in the number of children who have child protection plans – entries to CP are lower and exits from CP are higher – this should have a positive effect on capacity to visit and see children and record in a timely way. Additional focus by the Data and Performance team and the participants of Assurance clinics around understanding our Child in Need (CiN) population and how CiN Reviews and visiting of these children are recorded and measured. We are anticipating that this additional scrutiny, and subsequent developments in reporting, are likely to impact on the trends and numbers we have been reporting. An update will be given at the next Scrutiny Panel meeting in November 2022.

Indicator	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Target	Southampton 20/21	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
Percentage of children who had their supervision and was within the timescales	69% (1707/2442)	65% (1628/2470)	62% (1589/2527)	64% (1592/2483)	75% (1792/2380)	76% (1847/2422)	71% (1698/2383)	68% (1665/2426)	67% (1602/2358)	80%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CPP who had their supervision and was within the timescale	75% (338/448)	82% (375/457)	75% (369/490)	70% (341/487)	89% (405/454)	91% (389/424)	90% (376/414)	83% (315/377)	86% (318/368)	90%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA who had their supervision and was within the timescale	75% (415/547)	75% (415/548)	67% (378/561)	81% (460/563)	81% (462/566)	87% (488/560)	81% (455/555)	79% (442/555)	72% (401/552)	90%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of Care Leavers who had their supervision and was within the timescale	59% (102/173)	27% (56/209)	25% (52/218)	25% (57/226)	78% (165/212)	39% (86/221)	44% (90/204)	51% (128/251)	60% (152/252)	80%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Analysis

Overall, 67% of children had their cases and progress trajectories overseen via case supervision in August 2022 and 68% in July. This overall performance is in part negatively affected by care leavers supervision. Care leavers supervision data was not reliably available to managers until July 22; it is an area of increased scrutiny and development. Furthermore, we are working with the data team to drill down into CIN supervision levels as we think this is also an area affecting overall performance.

Actions / next steps

In addition to continuing to improve compliance in this area, we need to understand the quality of supervision; reflective conversations and the progression of plans for children. One of the key issues reported by managers for the current performance is the capacity to record supervision on Care Director amongst competing priorities. A new supervision template has been co-designed and is now in use. A bespoke core management skills programme launched in June 2022, which, alongside the updated Practice Standards, sets out the service expectations in respect of good supervision. Focus on Practice days with 'reflective teams' discussions with managers and practitioners have continued. To date the Practice Development Team has worked with the Children with Disabilities, Fostering and Adoption Teams, Early Help and Young People's Services.

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Number of contacts	1597	1890	1511	1767	1664	2092	1860	1588	1948	<17K	17661	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of referrals in the month	375	322	315	323	272	382	343	344	298	N/A	4092	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rates of referrals per 10,000 of Under 18 Population	658	717	775	836	52	126	192	258	316	700	790	647	561	464
Number of CLA at the end of the month	547	548	561	563	566	560	555	555	552	540	495	615	N/A	N/A
Number of children with an active Child in Need Plan not allocated to CWD (CIN*)	388	414	438	453	466	469	466	448	395	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of children who are subject of a Child Protection Plan as at the end of month	448	457	490	487	454	424	414	377	368	406	310	406	N/A	N/A
Number of care leavers	173	209	218	226	212	221	204	249	252	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Right Service at the Right Time

Analysis

Rate of re-referrals continues to rise, and volume is above our statistical neighbors and our last year average. Volume of Contacts increased in August after a dip in July and is creating demand pressure on the Children's Resource Service (CRS). Conversion rates from Contacts to Referrals was 15% demonstrating the amount of work undertaken in the CRS that does not progress to statutory assessment and subsequent offer of help or/and protection. Early Help assessments routed via CRS accounted for 5% of work processed at the CRS.

Some partner agencies are better at referring the right children to the CRS than others – this is reflected in the numbers of NFA (No Further Action) contacts coming from the schools, health professionals, the police and other organizations.

The number of children in care, and children subject to a child protection plan or child in need plans continue to reduce. This could be an indicator of social work with Children and Families and Young People's Service effecting change and improving outcomes for children and their families, with better help and protection being provided at the right time. With the number of re-referrals increasing and children with CIN and CP Plans decreasing, it could also be an indicator of stepping and closing cases down too soon. Demand and throughput dashboard and charts are being developed to help us understand children's pathways through the system and where to direct resources.

Action/next steps

A meeting has taken place with HIPS (Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, Southampton) and police colleagues, with a plan for the four LAs to maintain close oversight of the appropriateness of police contacts. A Southampton specific discussion took place with police in September 2022, with agreement that erroneous contacts will be shared with the police to assist with their own quality assurance.

Decision making by the Children's Resource Service is an area of focus. This is to provide assurance and challenge about threshold decision making and to ensure that demand is managed at the correct level and that children and families are not subjected to unnecessary statutory processes.

The plan to address the high number of children subject to child protection planning has been launched and partners were briefed at the Safeguarding Children's Partnership in June 2022. There has been a steady decline in the numbers of children with child protection plans in recent months.

Robust Corporate Parenting

RAG: Red – High Risk

Indicator	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Target	Southampton 20/21	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
Number of CLA at the end of the month	547	548	561	563	566	560	555	555	552	540	495	615	N/A	N/A
Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population	105	105	108	108	109	108	107	107	106	100	95	100	53	67
Number of CLA at the end of the month who are UASC	27	26	25	26	25	25	24	21	23	<37	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weeks or less visits)	81% (446/547)	83% (455/548)	74% (418/561)	80% (456/563)	84% (479/566)	81% (457/560)	85% (473/555)	83% (465/555)	75% (416/552)	97%	TBC	97	53	67
Percentage of CLA children with an up to date review	99%	99%	98%	98%	98%	97%	97%	98%	98%	95%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments are up to date.	82%	79%	76%	76%	72%	72%	71%	72%	72%	95%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after (BLA)	20%	9%	17%	8%	33%	33%	12%	13%	9%	90%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA at end of month with 3 or more placements during the year	25%	24%	23%	22%	20%	20%	20%	18%	17%	<10%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of CLA allocated to CWD	29	31	31	32	32	31	31	30	29	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of CLA accommodated on S20 (exc UASC) as at the end of the month	27	29	31	33	31	31	29	34	30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA with a permanence plan in place within 6 months of BLA	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of CLA placed for adoption at the end of the month	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA placed in IFA placements as at the end of the month	26% (143/547)	26% (145/548)	26% (148/561)	26% (148/563)	26% (149/566)	27% (152/560)	27% (154/555)	27% (155/555)	29% (161/552)	<36%	N/A	36%	38%	36%

Robust Corporate Parenting

Analysis

There has been a steady decrease in children in care numbers since April 2022. This is likely attributable to extensive work going on to prevent children from entering care – the newly established Young People’s Service that works with children with a spectrum of need starting at the early help level to the statutory edge of care services. We need further analysis of throughput, demand and outcomes for children and the impact on caseloads and capacity in other parts of the service. A bespoke dashboard and data set are in progress with a plan to analyse financial implications and re-direct funding if necessary.

Visiting children is an area of focus of workers, managers and senior managers, with the biggest challenge being staffing and service capacity.

CLA Reviews performance has been consistently above target in the last six months.

Children’s participation and how they drive their own reviews and planning needs to be understood better from qualitative perspective.

Performance around Initial Health Assessments continues to be a concern – only 9% of IHAs have been completed in August 2022 and 13% in July. Best performance in the last six months was in April and May at 33% but still short of the 90% target.

Placement stability has improved in recent months. This may be due to an increased focus on holding placement planning meetings, better matching and placement support.

We need to understand better the mental health and emotional well-being offer to children in care and how foster carers are supported and skilled up in looking after children who experienced adversity in their life.

Actions / Next Steps

We have been focusing on specific vulnerable groups of children in care: children placed in B&B, in unregulated/unregistered settings, placed with parents and placed with connected carers (reg 24).

Planning for permanency early and keeping children within families are also key areas of focus.

We have re-introduced two scrutiny panels to continue to have an oversight of these vulnerable groups of children and to drive early permanency planning. The next Exceptional Placement Arrangements Panel is due to re-commence in w/b 19th September 2022.

The recent peer review of looked after children and care leavers was timely and supports the service focus on the quality of management oversight (which needs to improve), staff stability and recruitment.

For looked after children, the areas of focus continues to be around senior level oversight of unregulated placements and unplanned entries into care (alongside planned activity through the Legal Gateway Panel). Better tracking by managers is also a priority to ensure the completion of chronologies and case summaries, following through on IRO challenge and outcome resolutions, more timely responses to children where SGO (Special Guardianship Orders) or reunification is the plan and a focus on children where specific aspects of life story work is needed.

For care leavers, the priorities are improving access to emotional and mental health support, links with adult services, housing pathways and commissioning arrangements, improving ETE (Education, Training, Employment) outcomes and communicating the service offer to post 21 young people who are closed to the service. In addition, the service is going to audit and speak to the last 15 leavers in August to consider what their experience has been of leaving care and what we can learn from this to include to what extent they feel prepared, aware of their entitlements etc.

What the data tells us

Type	Number	Analysis
Management Audits	31	Since July 2022, 31 managers completed their management audit and 17 did not. At 66% completion this represents an improving picture, although with more work to do. The areas where audits haven't been completed have been affected by management / leadership change and will now be a focus for the leadership team. Also, during the period 19 multi agency domestic abuse audits were completed and the first stage of the sec.47 audit started with 10 of the 60 allocated audits being completed to date.
Domestic Abuse	19	
Sec.47	60 allocated	

Action/next steps

- 2022 / 23 audit schedule has been agreed by the senior management team and includes priority areas from self-evaluation.
- Analysis of audit findings will be completed by October 2022, alongside moderation analysis of all the audits completed over the year.
- Targeted work with service areas who haven't engaged in the audit programme will be undertaken to further improve compliance.
- Team focused audit and reflection days have now been scheduled across the service. These involve managers auditing with practitioners and learning and reflective sessions delivered by the Principal Social Worker.
- 'Making the difference' practice forums are focusing more on 'the learning loop'.
- Targeted audits for early help and the young people's service have been scoped with the service areas.

Analysis

We are embedding performance monitoring and management culture and starting to introduce quality, impact and outcomes for children conversations in Assurance Clinics and other worker and management forums. The aim is to encourage and develop an outcome and impact based thinking culture within the workforce. Assurance Clinics are continuing to run on a rolling schedule. From September 2022 we are looking at a more streamlined and targeted sessions to 'drill down' in specific areas. Regular service and practice updates via position statements are planned to support service direction thinking and focus for managers and workers. Data continues to be reported at team and manager level and it is used to track progress operationally as well as having dashboards that provide an overview of the bigger picture, trends, comparisons and performance over time.

Action/next steps

Outputs from Assurance Clinics need to evidence impact on outcomes for children – the measure of success of embedding performance and quality culture will be improvements in performance against the services own, and statutory targets and timelines, in quality of work evidence via dip sampling and audits, by feedback from children and families, partners, the courts, etc.