

## January 2021 Performance overview of Children's Social Care and Early Help:

Children and Families Scrutiny Panel.

11th of February 2021.

### Overarching performance summary:

The service remains resilient in terms of Covid and staff have been accessing the vaccine to enable safe engagements with vulnerable families across the city. The leadership team have set out a range of improvement activities aiming to simplify access to services for children and to balance demand pressure across frontline teams. This work will assist improvements in both the quality of our work as well as the retention of staff. The council have supported an extension of permanent roles into the service to help meet demand and we have commenced recruitment work. We still have challenges in relation to high caseloads and referral rates; we are addressing these across five key strands set out in our improvement plan.

### Highlighted performance areas of focus:

- **Caseloads remain too high in Assessment, Protection and Court (PACT) and Looked after Children (LAC) teams**

**Response:** The service is working with the communications team regarding its recruitment campaign, which has commenced. We are receiving applicants and progressing these. We are also shifting the remits of teams to allow for wider Case-holding activity and therefore balancing out pressure.

- **The level of agency workers remains too high**

**Response:** Approval granted to make over-establishment social worker posts permanent. HR and finance are working in January to create the posts; alongside the other operational and support roles requested.

- **Audit completion remains low, with an impact on the Year of the Child cohort**

**Response:** Audit workshops for managers are being delivered January – March 2021. There will be a continued focus on Year of the Child. The service will pilot a new way of undertaking management audits, linked to service delivery plans in February / March. Thematic audits by the quality assurance unit will continue. UPDATE: we have trialled the audit training and received positive feedback. *We have started working with the Assessment Service managers on their training and are scheduling the sessions for PACT, LAC and Permanence.*

- **ICPC timeliness performance remains low**

**Response:** In light of ongoing performance, the QA Unit manager will meet with the HoS for social care, the relevant service managers and the Child Protection advisor to confirm an improvement plan in January 2021. *Update: Meeting has taken place with agreement for management oversight on each relevant case. January data shows some improvement.*

- **Rates of sec.47, children subject to child protection planning and looked after children are high**

**Response:** This will be a focus for the new analyst working in MASH, EDT and Assessment.

- **Children with CPP rate remains high**

**Response:** Looking forward, the Strengthening Families approach has been confirmed as one element of the Southampton restorative practice model and CP chairs will begin delivering awareness raising workshops to staff and partners. This should support the more regular implementation of safe, alternatives to CP planning. Finally, the development of our vulnerable adolescents offer (a two month development project is underway) will have an impact upon planning for the older cohort

- **Looked after children rate remains high**

**Response:** Analysis of entry into care in Southampton is informing the development of vulnerable adolescent provision; alongside the panel activity that has been implemented.

- **Education Training and Employment engagement for care leavers has reduced since the last Board**

**Response:** The service has reviewed its Skills and Development Plan. There is a recommendation that there is a focused discussion at Improvement Board on this area.

- **Use of IFA shows a small increase and in house foster placements shows a reducing trend.**

**Response:** The service is reviewing children placed in IFA with complex needs (alongside residential placements) as part of its panel activity and development of the residential offer. The recruitment strategy for 2020-23 is in place and staffing resources have been requested in order to implement the strategy and recruit more foster carers.

Leadership Team  
DFSC 11/02/2022