

Children's Services Overview – Annual Report to Council 2009

Children in Need

Statement

Services are delivered to children and young people in line with our eligibility criteria. Our aim is to maintain children in their own homes. We actively safeguard and protect children and young people by targeting those who have or are likely to suffer significant harm. Multi agency early interventions are identified through the vulnerable children's panel. Services available to support this group of children and young people are limited. The Families First project developed with Barnardo's supports an early intervention model. This needs to be evaluated following its first year of operation.

Judgement

Performance on the completion of assessments on time needs to be improved. Currently our target for initial assessments carried out within 7 days is 75%. Performance 60% year end target 62%.

Currently our target for core assessments carried out within 35 days is 75-80%. Year end target 65%.

This has in part been affected by the introduction of DRAIG and ICS. Improvement is expected through the ongoing development of ICS and the recruitment of five additional social workers which will assist in reducing caseloads which are currently too high. It needs to be acknowledged that the introduction of electronic recording has significantly slowed the process down and social workers are spending less time with children and their families, as reported nationally.

Actions

- Continue to work in partnership to develop a range of services that support early interventions
- Continue to work and develop the implementation of ICS
- Monitor performance against Performance Indicators
- Recruit additional social workers.

Looked After Children

Statement

The number of children and young people looked after is currently 207. All cases are actively reviewed and monitored and the Independent Reviewing Officer confirms they are appropriate placements. When safe to do so children and young people are returned to their families. The number of looked after children is undoubtedly affected by the lack of early interventions and there is some evidence that the introduction of the Families First project has stemmed the growing number. The authority has only four young people in residential

care down from an all time high of 13. This has had a positive effect on the budget.

Judgement

Overall our performance against a range of Performance Indicators is high. Reviews on time high nineties and statutory visits in upper nineties. All children and young people are allocated to a qualified social worker. Our reliance on Independent foster placement is falling, we are continuing to recruit foster carers and our Placement stability is well below the Welsh average.

Actions

- Continue to recruit foster carers so that we have a pool which allows us to continue to improve matching.
- Consider the business case under consideration to develop supported living for young people, again reducing our usage of residential care outside of the borough
- Maintain the quality assurance culture across the division
- Continue to monitor our performance against key PIs and ensure that our high performance is maintained

Leaving Care

Statement

The 16+ team is well established within the borough, and has been further enhanced by the development of the Torfaen Young People's Support Service. This service is multi agency and provides a service for all vulnerable 16 to 21 year olds. The 16+ team undertakes the statutory social work duties and are compliant with the requirement laid down in the Children (leaving care) Act 2000.

Judgement

The 16+ team is a high performing team when set against key performance indicators. Our target for pathway plans completed on time is 100%; our projection for year end is 77%. Those not completed are low in number and usually centre around the young person's reluctance to engage. However we are not complacent and are always seeking ways to improve this position. All care leavers have an allocated social worker and 77% have personal advisor again this is low numbers and dependant on individual circumstances. Mental health support is available through the TYPPS service which has bridged the gap which exists between CAMHS and adult mental health by employing a CPN. The council has committed to the employment of care leavers and progress has been made in this area.

Action

- Continue to monitor performance against key PIs
- Continue to develop accommodation options to address gaps in provision
- Pursue European bid to sustain the after care employment scheme

Youth Offending Service

Statement

The Youth Offending Service is a jointly commissioned service with Monmouthshire. The service is managed on a day to day basis by Monmouthshire. The aim of the service is to prevent offending and re-offending. The service is multi disciplinary. Social care, health, education, probation and the police are statutory partners. An annual service level agreement is in place and is reviewed. The performance of the YOT is monitored by the YOT Local Management board which meets on a bi-monthly basis.

Judgement

The YOT currently sits within the top quartile of national performance. The recent inspection overall judgment is that the YOT is performing well. The number of first time entrants (young people coming into the justice system) is falling.

Actions

- Continue to monitor performance against the key performance indicators through the Local Management Board.
- Develop trend analysis information to assist in service planning
- Monitor any potential changes in legislation (PACE). this could have a significant implication on workload
- Continue to work with the LEA to ensure that young people get the education they are entitled to.

Transition –Disabled Young People

Statement

The authority and its partners are committed to develop a co-ordinated approach to transition to ensure a smooth pathway to adult services. This process must meet the needs of the young people and be shaped by their views and those of their parents and carers. Throughout this process there needs to be a clearly defined pathway to ensure that young people understand how their view are effecting service provision. Work is ongoing in

developing a clear transition policy based on the All Gwent model. The LEA and Social Care are currently working together with the objective of combining current systems to improve outcomes for young people.

Judgement

Joint protocols are in place with partner agencies to ensure that a smooth and coordinated transition takes place however young people report that there is still more to be done to achieve joined up coordinated services. Evidence from a recent independent evaluation suggests that young people are tired and frustrated of having to repeat their story

Action

- To continue to monitor local interagency performance against the NSF targets
- Ensure that link worker from Adult Services is always allocated post fourteen
- Attendance of link worker to be monitored at all annual reviews
- NYAS support and information sessions to be developed to ensure young people's voices are heard.
- Ongoing evaluation of service to inform future plan
- Development of further events which capture the views of service users

Child Protection

Statement

We have established systems and processes to ensure that referrals are acted upon in a timely and appropriate manner. We fully implemented the framework for assessment and ensured that partners were fully engaged. We are following a similar process with the implementation of the Integrated Children's System.

Judgement

Clearly no-one can ever be complacent in this area and we take every child protection concern very seriously. All referrals are screened at the point of entry in the referral and assessment team. The percentage of referrals during the year on which a decision was made within 24 hours target 100% year end projection 97%.

The percentage of initial CP conferences during the year which were held with 15 working days of the strategy meeting; Target 75% year end projection 42%. The reason for the delay is due to ongoing investigation with joint agencies, lack of availability with key partners whose attendance at the meeting is critical. Whilst our performance could be better around initial conferences, our performance of initial core group meetings during the year

that were held with 10 days of the initial conference target 75% year end projection 88%.

Actions

- Continue to monitor key performance information
- Ensuring that the LSCB receives regular reports
- Continue to work with partners to improve performance and where necessary address through LSCB
- The appointment of the LSCB Business Co-ordinator to develop the broader safeguarding agenda.