

**Select Committee on Children's Services – 16 September 2010**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Directorate of Children's Services – Contextual Information regarding Performance in the Following Areas:-**

1. Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out in less than 7 working days
2. Number of children and young people supported through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) (Cumulative total since 01.02.09)
3. Percentage of looked after children with 3 or more placements during the year
4. Percentage of young offenders engaged in suitable education, employment or training (EET).

**Purpose of Report**

1. To inform members of the committee about specific performance measures, and factors affecting performance measures, in a small number of specific areas highlighted in the quarterly reporting process. To inform members of actions being taken and which are planned, to improve performance.

**Background**

2. The Directorate of Children's Services reports regularly to Select Committee on issues where we are performing below target in order to help members understand why this is the case, and what the Directorate of Children's Services and the Children's Trust is doing to improve. This report is based upon the performance measures within our Directorate Strategic Plan. In some cases performance measures have not changed since last time as they are based upon data that is only reported annually e.g. examination results.
3. It should be remembered that these matters are reported in the overall context of Children's Services having been judged as good in the 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment.

## **1. Percentage of assessments of social care referrals carried out within 7 days of referral**

Recent OfSTED inspection has indicated that where children are at risk of significant harm action is taken promptly to safeguard them this was identified as a strength. The Safeguarding Board continues to work effectively with all partner agencies. However there has been a rise in trend of referral to children's social care which has impacted on our ability to respond to initial assessments and therefore there remains the potential for some children to not receive the services in a timely way to meet their needs. It is particularly affected by the police notifications for domestic abuse. A new process has been put in place to deal with these referrals more effectively at the point of referral this should lead to improved performance against this indicator.

Key elements of our Improvement Plan are:

- Implementation of guidance on the role of Children's Social Care in relation to the common assessment process in order to safely reduce the numbers of children being referred for social care assessment
- Taking steps to ensure that domestic abuse notifications can be dealt with as "contacts" rather than referrals – this should reduce the conversion rate to initial assessments by 20% and reduce the amount of admin work
- Re designation of roles and responsibilities to establish a Domestic Abuse Response Team
- Development of regional and local protocols in relation to class A drugs and substance misuse in order to ensure appropriate referral practice
- Extending the Team Around the Child school pilot which is proving successful in meeting early need without referral to Children's Social Care (CSC)
- Working with senior managers in other agencies to improve referral practice
- Developing multi-agency teams to work with young people and families at an early stage to help prevent the need for referral to Children's Social Care, and to increase capacity by workers in these teams remaining engaged should referral become necessary
- Appointing additional agency workers to the Assessment Teams to provide capacity to deal with the volume of work

## **2. Number of children and young people supported through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) (Cumulative total since 01.02.09)**

Although we are behind our target for this indicator the increase in the number of common assessments completed since 01.02.09 has been considerable. Numerous successful actions have been taken to support our own staff and partners to complete common assessments. An intensive programme of support for individuals is available from our team of CAF Coordinators, guidance has been

streamlined and simplified, and we have targeted particular groups for intensive assistance. We have further improvement actions planned including the identification of priority areas in the borough where need amongst young people and families is high.

We are also working on ways to make the common assessment process more effective in reducing the number of referrals to Children's Social Care, with the long term aim of safely bringing down the number of looked after children. This should involve the use of the common assessment process at an earlier stage in the development of children who are experiencing problems, to prevent their issues from escalating to the point where more serious intervention is needed.

### **3. Percentage of looked after children with 3 or more placements during the year**

Whilst this is slightly above the target it still indicates that children are maintained in stable placements in the vast majority of cases.

It should be noted that some of the placement moves are positive in that children are going on to permanent arrangements such as long term fostering, adoption and indeed back to their birth families. Historically Dudley has shown good performance against this particular target. Dudley has invested in specialist support for foster carers to enable placements to be maintained and provide stable and on-going care for looked after children

### **4. Percentage of young offenders in education, employment or training**

All cases of young people not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) have been analysed on an individual basis from which no general cause has been identified for this current rate of performance.

The Youth Offending Service has continued to support young people, to engage and remain in employment, education or training.

Young Offenders are a priority group within our Targeted Youth Support Plan. Our Youth Offending Service (YOS) treat young offenders who are in danger of becoming NEET as a priority. There are monthly meetings attended by YOS staff, Connexions Personal Advisers and others to analyse data and to discuss action plans for individual "hard to engage" cases. Systems are in place with Connexions to support any young person who has completed their order and is still NEET. Advice and Guidance is offered to all NEET young people. A weekly job club has been developed specifically for young offenders. This has enabled some of the obstacles, which prevent engagement to be addressed. Post 16 providers meet young people face to face in order to support them into provision.

## **Finance**

4. Our action plans concerning improvements in these areas are based upon existing budgets.

## **Law**

5. The main pieces of legislation governing these aspects of our work are the Children Act 2004 and the Education and Inspections Act of 2006.

## **Equality Impact**

6. OfSTED judges that Dudley's Services for all children and young people are good but agrees with our self assessment that the progress of children in care and those with learning difficulties/disabilities should continue to be seen as priorities for improvement.

## **Recommendation**

7. That the report be noted by the committee.



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## **List of Background Papers**