

Minutes of the Children's Service Improvement Panel
Meeting Held: 22 June 2011 09:00 Medway Suite

Present:

Mrs Whittle (Chair)
Mrs Allen
Mrs Dean
Miss Hohler
Mr Lake
Mr Smith
Mrs Waters
Mr Wells

Officers:

Malcolm Newsam
Debra Exall
Jennifer Maiden-Brooks
Fiona Maycock (Clerk)
Donna Shkalla

Apologies:

Mr Christie
Mr Cubitt
Mr Ferrin

1. Previous Minutes

1.1 Debra Exall advised that Corporate Parenting Member training sessions would be held on 13 and 20 July 2011. **Mrs Whittle asked for additional sessions to be booked for early autumn.**

1.2 The minutes of the previous Improvement Panel were agreed as a true representation of the meeting. Confirmation was given that the minutes will be reported to Cabinet and the Specialist Children's Services POSC to provide transparency and regular monitoring of progress against the Improvement Plan.

2. Corporate Director's Progress Report

2.1 Mr Newsam summarised the report. The number of referrals to Children's Services continues to be high, as does the number of Initial Assessments started. Timeliness of completion of Initial Assessments is improving.

2.2 An audit of the work of the County Duty Team shows a significant increase in quality. Mrs Allen asked whether it is possible to know where the referrals are coming from. Donna Shkalla confirmed that Children's Services already report on the source of contact but additional work is being done to analyse in detail the contact trail (who refers, what happens) using May data. **This will be provided at the next meeting.** Mr Newsam informed Members that eventually all contacts will be migrated into a County Duty Service; this will ensure one common centre for contacts and consistency of thresholds, less work in and reduced pressure on the 12 Duty and Initial Assessment Teams (DIAT).

2.3 Good progress was also being made on completing Core Assessments out of timescale. The peripatetic team (interim social workers) have had a big impact but Mr Newsam emphasised the danger of them simply transferring cases back to permanent social workers at the end of their contract. To avoid this, there is robust management of throughput, including setting anticipated end dates for all peripatetic team cases. Mr Wells asked when the Parenting Capacity Assessment Service (PCAS) teams would return to their normal work, and what the impact has been of them not undertaking their normal workload. Mr Newsam explained that staff are aware no decision has yet been made about future structure, however it does not appear that diverting PCAS has had any significant negative impact on the service. Mrs Whittle confirmed that there is little evidence that Courts regard PCAS teams as any more independent than the children and family social workers. **It was agreed that officers should consider whether, and for how long, PCAS would be needed to provide additional capacity when the peripatetic team's contract finishes and provide advice on this to Members.**

2.4 Miss Hohler asked whether we are likely to meet the Ofsted targets as the data shows we still have some way to go. Mr Newsam was confident that the targets on unallocated cases and timeliness of Initial Assessments would be achieved. On timeliness of Core Assessments, the target of 100 was incredibly difficult for a county the size of Kent, equating to just a handful of cases per district. However, he had spent a significant amount of time discussing each team's plans for achieving the target and he was confident that very significant improvement would be demonstrated over the next few weeks.

3. Core Strategy Updates

3.1 Debra Exall outlined the progress made against each of the core tasks. She informed Members that Donna Marriott and Donna Shkalla will be presenting the Performance Management Framework and Online Quality Assurance tool to the next Improvement Board; **this will then be brought to the next Improvement Panel meeting.**

3.2 Mrs Whittle reported on a recent discussion with Detective Superintendent Maria Shepherd from Kent Police regarding establishment of a multi-agency referral centre with Police, Health, and Children's Services. This should improve screening, reduce inappropriate referrals and promote feedback to other organisations.

3.3 On supervision, Mr Newsam emphasised that this was an area of vulnerability for the organisation. A supervision audit is taking place in June and July and it is anticipated that it will reveal that the quality and level of supervision is still not what it should be, for the reasons outlined in the core strategy update. **The results of the Supervision Audit will be brought to a future CSIP meeting.**

3.4 Mr Lake asked what progress has been made on providing tools for recording supervision following the Price Waterhouse Cooper Review. Donna Shkalla explained that ICS currently records supervision case notes and actions - it is planned to develop a performance management tool to assist with understanding progress for the child from one supervision to the next. This will be coupled with the worker supervision tracker currently being piloted in Dover. These cannot be combined as one is about the worker and the other about the child.

3.5 Mr Smith emphasised the need to focus on the children. Mrs Whittle agreed and accepted there is an enormous pressure on staff to deliver all the improvements simultaneously. Reducing social worker caseloads and a good IT recording system should enable them to spend more time with children and families. Mr Newsam reminded Members that the problems are long standing, including under-investment in the past, but increasing managerial discipline will deliver effective working and better outcomes for children.

3.8 Mrs Whittle informed Members that a way to celebrate the work of social workers is being proactively sought. Mr Newsam also cited the excellent work of Donna Marriott and the Safeguarding Unit, and Donna Shkalla and the Management Information Unit. Mr Smith asked for the Panel formally to recognise their achievements.

3.9 Debra Exall reported that a progress report will be going to the Improvement Board on the Integrated Children's System (ICS), **which will come to the next Improvement Panel**. Mrs Dean asked for an estimate of timescale for implementation of a new system. Mr Newsam gave a minimum timescale of 12 months after the agreement has been finalised. He explained that improvements to the current ICS system are being made - upgrades have been implemented to networks and increased memory capacity of individual PCs and laptops - but these are not long term solutions.

4. Data Reports

4.1 Donna Shkalla explained the reports to Members for clarity of interpretation; percentage of referrals going on to initial assessments gives the comparison between the number of referrals received and number of initial assessments started.

4.2 A permanence tracking tool is looking at mapping the number of adoptions month on month to provide a reflection of the true picture.

4.3 The results of the district deep dives will be given at the next meeting.

5. Information Reports

5.1 Mrs Allen asked for confirmation that Health partners have signed up to the Improvement Programme. Mrs Whittle reported that Lorraine Goodsell, Director, Commissioning Child Health NHS Kent and Medway, and Helen

Jones, Specialist Children's Services Head of Commissioning are driving forward a jointly commissioned CAMHS service and performance will be measured by the appropriate council committee.

5.2 Donna Shkalla will report to Donna Marriott and Penny Davies concerns over dissemination of information around preventative work with partner agencies.

Dates of future meetings

Agenda Setting*	Time	Meeting	Time	
12 April	4 pm	26 April 2011	12.30	Waterton Lee
3 May	11 am	17 May	4 pm	Swale 3
7 June	4 pm	22 June	9 am	Medway
6 July	3.30 pm	13 July	3 pm	Swale 3
27 July	10 am	25 August	11 am	Swale 3
31 August	2 pm	20 September	2 pm	Medway room