

Minutes of the Children's Service Improvement Panel
Meeting Held: 17 January 2012 14:00 Cabinet Room

Present:

Mrs Whittle (Chair)
Mr Christie
Mrs Dean
Mr Lake
Mr Smith

Officers:

Andrew Ireland
Jean Imray
Donna Shkalla
Jennifer Maiden-Brooks
Fiona Maycock (Clerk)
Michelle Woodward

Apologies:

Miss Hohler

1. Previous Minutes

1.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the last meeting and agreed for distribution to Cabinet.

2. Progress Report

2.1 Members were reassured that both Andrew Ireland and Jean Imray see detailed information on a weekly basis about the cases which are unallocated for more than 28 days.

2.2 Donna Shkalla confirmed that the number of children in need and number of children subject to a child protection plan in Kent far exceeds comparisons to our statistical neighbours. The number of LAC however, when factoring in deprivation levels, is more consistent with statistical neighbours. Despite Kent not being an outlier, nationally the number of LAC is of concern which mirrors Members and Officers views in Kent.

2.3 Focused work to move long term child protection cases onto other arrangements has had a significant impact on the overall numbers of children subject to a child protection plan.

2.4 Mrs Dean requested that statistical neighbour information be included in the graphs in future Progress Reports to aid understanding.

2.5 Donna Shkalla explained various factors affecting the increase in percentage of Core Assessments completed within timescale. However, it was warned that quality of casework could not be determined by timescale data; a percentage completed close to 100% would likely indicate a reduction in casework quality.

2.6 In terms of case audits, results suggest that too many cases were rated as good prior to the workshop, a reflection of the OfSTED conclusions. The workshop focused on expectations and understanding of what constitutes

each of the ratings, including examples of what good cases look like. This changed ratings to levels closer to expectations.

2.7 Improving the quality of casework can take between 3 to 5 years; the shift will be gradual within the reports. The post-workshop data shows the baseline on which to build; this should be included in future references to performance. Donna Shkalla recommended targets not be set until trends are evident with additional audits.

2.8 Mrs Whittle asked for a presentation on the progress made in recruiting experienced Social Workers to be included on a future agenda.

2.9 Members agreed that more involvement for children and parents would be beneficial both to families and staff. Jean Imray confirmed this emphasis is in the Phase 2 Improvement Plan but will be an increased focus going forward.

3. Practice Improvement Programme Report

3.1 Jean Imray emphasised the Practice Improvement Programme as just one element of the package of quality and practice improvements. The programme will work with individuals to focus on caseloads, quality, working practice and embedding good habits.

3.2 Donna Marriott confirmed the timetable of the programme was developed following learning from the DIAT Improvement Programme. The weekly report is expected to evidence the programme's effect.

3.3 Members were assured of the value external consultants (Beverley Clarke and Debbie Owen) contribute to this programme as they have built relationships and trust with teams, and Social Workers embrace their suggestions for change.

4. OfSTED Targets Performance Report

4.1 The shifted focus in the Phase 2 Plan towards improving quality has meant the performance reporting needs have changed. District scorecards will replace the monthly report with trend information to be added to the quarterly report. Members highlighted the need for using a single data set in a multitude of settings. The scorecards will form the basis of the Deep Dives to explore the process and understand any issues, with additional contextual information from the Heads of Service.

4.2 The indicators and targets have been set by a focus group of staff and reflect the expectations for the future. Some targets will be revised at 1st April to reflect the impact of the backlog seen in the current year.

4.3 Multi-agency reports will include the KSCB monthly report, Kent Corporate Parenting quarterly report and a report being scoped for the Central Referral Unit. Members suggested that a form of performance report should go to the FSC Committee, as the Kent Corporate Parenting Report (currently goes to Cabinet and POSC) is very broad. The locality boards would also benefit from specific data; Donna Shkalla confirmed that initial discussions around performance data have been positive.

4.4 In terms of the ratings on the scorecard, many of the green indicators reflect Phase 1 actions, whereas many of the red indicators represent partnership working and Phase 2 areas for development. However there are still some issues with recording, evident by red ratings (e.g. percentage of children seen at initial assessment).

4.5 The impact of the backlog and the Central Duty Team will be monitored as it moves to the Central Referral Unit.

5. Supervision Training Report

5.1 Michelle Woodward outlined the need for improving supervision arrangements following the OfSTED inspection in October 2010. Training sessions were run between December 2010 and April 2011, with an audit to assess the impact in July 2011. The results of the audit showed, against anecdotal evidence, that improved practice had not been embedded.

5.2 A new training provider is being procured and will focus on improving skills and effective and smarter recording of supervision. In addition, the number of supervisees per supervisor will be addressed in the structure proposals.

5.3 Michelle Woodward confirmed that the disciplinary process for overseas staff is the same as for British staff; a set of standards are to be met and robust management needs to be evidenced before action is taken.

6. Data Reports

6.1 Jean Imray indicated that the Deep Dives will focus on the action taken to safeguard children at risk and the summary of all Deep Dive actions will be included in the next Progress Report from Andrew Ireland.

6.2 Recommendations from Martin Narey's report will be incorporated into districts and specialist services work.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Nothing to discuss.

8. For Information Reports

8.1 The inspection-ready programme for DIAT teams continued until all districts were rated as green. Plans from this programme, together with plans from the deep dives will identify areas of challenge to move forwards.

8.2 Priority three focuses on the importance of the preventative services role in Specialist Children's Services and how we can prevent too many children tipping into specialist interventions. £2.7 million will be spent on the Preventative Service including reintroduction of the Family Support Service.

8.3 There is a zero tolerance on LAC permanent exclusions, so the prevention of 14 as reported in the Summary Report was raised as a significant achievement.

Dates of future meetings

Agenda Setting*	Time	Meeting	Time	Venue
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
12 October	10.30am	24 October	2.30 pm	Cabinet Room
15 November	11am	7 December	3pm	Cabinet Room
4 January 2012	3pm	17 January 2012	2pm	Cabinet Room
14 February	10am	7 March	3pm	3rd Floor, Brenchley House
21 March	10am	11 April	3pm	Cabinet Room