

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25th April 2019

**Agenda
Item No.**

10

Scrutiny working group in relation to Ofsted recommendations

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr T Wilson – Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services and Public Health

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update of the progress in relation to the recommendations of the 2018 Scrutiny Working Group into the first two recommendations of the ofsted action plan.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that thresholds of need are understood and applied at every stage of the child’s journey.

Recommendation 2 Ensure that frontline management oversight of practice improves the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children

Reason for scrutiny:

The report was requested by the Chair of Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee to provide an update so that members can monitor the progress of the recommendations made by the working group last year.

Recommendations:

Scrutiny notes the contents of the report and the progress to date.

Background papers:

Children’s Services Ofsted Working Group Report March 2018
Children’s Services Ofsted Action Plan

Resource and legal considerations:

Responding to children at risk of significant harm is a statutory duty placed on local authority Chief Executives, Directors of Children’s Services, LSCB Chairs and senior

managers within organisations who commission and provide services for children and families, including social workers and professionals from health services, adult services, the police, Academy Trusts, education and the voluntary and community sector who have contact with children and families.

The resources required to respond to this statutory requirement come from within the existing resources across the partnership of organisations working in Walsall to protect vulnerable children and those at risk of harm.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

Strategic priority 2018-2021

- Children have the best start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.

Citizen impact:

The effective delivery of high quality services to vulnerable children and young people and their families has a direct impact on the welfare and well-being of children and young people in Walsall.

Environmental impact:

There is no environmental impact.

Performance management:

Performance is monitored by the Director of Children's Services and senior leaders at the monthly directorate Performance Board and progress against the Ofsted Action plan is monitored by the Directorate Management Group.

Reducing inequalities:

The work of children's service is key in improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children, young people and families in Walsall and therefore contributes to reducing inequalities within the Borough

Consultation:

N/A

Contact Officer:

Debbie Carter
Assistant Director
 01922 652756

1 Introduction: Between January and March 2018 members were involved in a working group which reviewed progress in relation to the first two recommendations of the Ofsted action plan. A number of social workers, managers and representatives from Health and Police were interviewed as part of this review. The working group made a number of recommendations in response to the information they heard. This report provides an update on these recommendations.

2 Recommendation 1: Ensure that thresholds of need are understood and applied at every stage of the child's journey.

2.1 *Provide a briefing to Members re: the removal of the statutory requirement to have a Local Safeguarding Board* – There has been discussion at Scrutiny throughout the year and specifically the Chair of WSCB discussed this when she presented at Scrutiny earlier in the year. Work has been underway to develop the new arrangements and a report is going to Cabinet in April to outline the proposed new arrangements in. A full briefing will be presented to the next Scrutiny Board.

2.2 *That MASH team needs to be strengthened by the allocation of support from a housing worker and a mental health nurse.* The Group Manager with responsibility for the Multi-agency safeguarding hub MASH and a Service Manager from Money, Home Job undertook a three-month scoping work in respect of referrals presenting at MASH where information from housing colleagues would have strengthened the immediate decision making. The outcome of this exercise was that both services felt that demand was not such that it required a housing officer to be permanently based in MASH and that information sharing to inform immediate decision making could be achieved by ensuring a single point of contact (SPOC). This has been put in place in respect of Money Home Job with positive outcomes. Work is now ongoing to put the same arrangements in place with the largest social registered landlords. In respect of the addition of a Mental Health Nurse, the Clinical Commissioning Group are considering this as part of their current review.

2.3. *That Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust be requested to consider allocating additional staffing in order to increase the nursing support provided by the Trust to MASH*

Work is ongoing to scope what the local health system response needs to be within the MASH. This will include capacity/resource required and the processes that health staff will work to. It is intended that this information will then be considered as part of whole MASH review. Lead by the Clinical Commissioning Group, this will be completed by June 2019.

2.3 *That the use of the escalation policy be encouraged and further information on the policy and its use (including a clear indication of how to escalate cases) be communicated to all partners to encourage them to take ownership of it and incorporate it into their own processes and training programmes.*

The use of escalation is included in the current multi-agency 'Right Child, Right Help' training package. The current escalation policy is being reviewed and will be completed and launched by the end of May 2019 to coincide with the planned review of the current LSCB Threshold document.

2.4 *That there is a regular audit to improve social worker assessments of families and their children prior to such cases being referred to the MASH*

Children and families referred to MASH are not open to Children's Social Care at the time of referral and will not, therefore, have had a social work assessment prior to referral. Both Early Help and the MASH Management Group undertake regular audits of the quality of referrals made and, in the case of early help, the quality of the early help assessments. Where learning is identified, feedback is provided to the practitioner. As an example of impact over the last 6 months, this activity has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of referrals made to MASH by education providers which in turn has resulted in the vast majority of referrals from these sources being accepted and progressed.

2.5 *That comparative data be sought from other local authorities that use the Wolverhampton Court and CAFCASS in order to assess and understand the regional practice in relation to making care orders at home.*

This has been undertaken on a sub-regional basis via the Family Justice Board. This is a meeting between the Assistant Directors from the four Black Country authorities, Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire, CAFCASS and representatives from the judiciary. There has been a recognition that the Wolverhampton circuit is a significant outlier in the use of care orders at home as a final outcome of proceedings and work with the judiciary to change practice in this area is ongoing.

2.6 *That the forthcoming training on thresholds be subject to evaluation and follow up within six weeks of the events. This is to determine and assist the LSCB to understand the difference that is being made due to its impact.*

Training was reviewed in June 2018 and has been reviewed again in February 2019. The current training package which explains the thresholds for statutory intervention has been renamed 'Right Child, Right Help' as we believe that will assist professionals and voluntary sector practitioners in Walsall to recognise and implement a graduated response to meeting the needs of children and their families. The LSCB Business Unit routinely requests feedback from practitioner's 6-8 weeks after attendance at any training provision. The response rate is variable. This was discussed at the March 2019 Board meeting with all partners challenged about the need to improve this. As a result, further work has been agreed to strengthen the training footprint with a report back to the Board scheduled for June 2019. As part of the 'Right for Children' Transformation programme Walsall has been working with Camden Children's Services as a 'Partner in Practice' to review the practice and remodel processes within the MASH.

3 **Recommendation 2: Ensure that frontline management oversight of practice improves the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children**

3.1 That consideration is given to commissioning of amendments to the supervision monitoring tool and mosaic in order to

a) either

i) take account of staff member absence, for example due to illness or being on maternity leave, and accurately reflect this in the statistics.

or

ii) incorporate an additional field in the template to allow an explanation for when a supervision meeting could not take place.

b) Provide managers with a facility on the dash board that will enable them to generate both in time data and reports.

a) The Supervision Monitoring Tool has been amended to take account of staff member absence; those on long-term sick or maternity leave are excluded from the calculations to ensure an accurate overview of the level of supervision taking place across the service. The monitoring tool has been extended to include Early Help and Residential Services to give a wider overview of the experience of staff in receiving supervision.

b) The performance dashboards do not current accommodate the ability to generate “in time” data and reports for supervision.

3.2 That further investigation be carried out into the manner in which the informal discussion of cases can be more effectively recorded by managers and staff members, and then better incorporated in the supervision process

The expectation of the recording of informal case discussions is clearly set out in both the supervision policy and practice standards. All informal supervision is recorded on Mosaic under a Management Decision Record and then incorporated into the following supervision template. The practice standards in relation to management oversight states

“Information contained within the MDR(s) should be reflected in the next supervision session as part of the recording relating to what has changed since the last supervision session”.

3.3 That the communication of information on training programs be reviewed to achieve consistency of approach, so all members of staff are aware of training opportunities as and when they are available

All training programmes are advertised in the Learning and Development Directory that is located on the intranet. Access to certain courses might be limited to specific specialisms and would not be available to all staff. Decisions in relation to the target audience for training are made at the Training Steering Group, chaired by the Assistant Director. There are clear expectations of the training and development programmes that Social Workers at different levels of their career pathway need to complete. These again are outlined in the Directory and reinforced in service meetings with staff.

4 *That further investigation be carried out into the caseloads being borne by on- call and duty social workers*

The caseloads of all Social Workers across Childrens Services are scrutinised at Performance Board on a monthly basis. A caseload monitoring report is produced identifying the average of caseloads across the Service as a whole; within individual services; within individual units and per Social Worker. This enables the Director to have a clear oversight of the volume of work allocated and identify particular pressure points in the system. The Caseload Monitoring report includes Initial Response Service who have in the report, been referred to as “duty workers”. Sometimes a Social Worker will need to work outside of their normal working arrangements, e.g. late into the evening. This is always acknowledged by their manager and they will be encouraged to take time off to compensate, either the next day or later in the week.