

**Education & Children's Services
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

11 October 2016

Children who become subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Rose Burley

Executive Summary:

Children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) have been assessed to be at risk of significant harm. They receive multi agency support through the Plan under the monitoring of the lead social worker and the core group of involved professionals. When the risk to the child has been assessed to have reduced to a safe level the child comes off the child protection plan. A period of support is provided at a lower level of intervention to ensure the change that reduced the risk to the child is embedded and sustained. If the risk escalates and the child cannot be kept safe from significant harm on a child protection plan the child may become Looked After.

The report considers children who have been subject to CPP's more than once. The Local Authority always seeks to make the right assessment of need at the right time and to make effective plans for vulnerable children. Repeat periods of planning indicate the possibility that interventions have not fully addressed concerns to ensure positive changes have been made and are maintained. The percentage of children who become subject to a CPP for a second and subsequent time is monitored locally and nationally.

Reason for Scrutiny:

In 2016 the number of children subject to two or more child protection plans in Walsall increased to just over 17% which was above national and statistical neighbour averages for the first time in 5 years. This therefore needs Scrutiny to understand the reasons and be reassured that all appropriate action is being taken. The report identifies local performance in terms of children subject to more than one period of child protection planning, considering this in the context of national and statistical neighbour performance, and takes into consideration the findings of an audit of repeat CPP carried out in June 2016.

Recommendations:

That:

1. Scrutiny note the content of the report and the improvement that has been made in reducing the numbers of repeat child protection plans, down to 8.5% at the end of August 2016.
2. Scrutiny challenge and hold officers to account to continue to ensure improved outcomes for children with child protection plans

Background papers: None.

Resource and legal considerations:

The Children Act 1989 places a duty on the Local Authority to investigate when a child may be at risk of significant harm. An outcome of a child protection investigation, when concerns are substantiated, can be a child protection plan agreed through the multi-agency forum of a child protection conference, as outlined in Working Together 2015 and in Walsall's Local Safeguarding Board Procedures.

Citizen impact:

Effective statutory interventions should lead to improved outcomes for vulnerable children and their families in a timely manner.

Environmental impact:

Not directly relevant to this report.

Performance management:

A range of performance measures at a strategic and operational level are in place to monitor and track the timely and accurate completion of all statutory requirements and service expectations, for example completion of assessments of need and statutory visits to children with child protection plans. The number and quality of work with children who have two or more child protection plans is robustly and regularly monitored. It is a key measure in the Children's Services performance Dataset and reported to Scrutiny Board.

Equality Implications:

Children with child protection plans are highly vulnerable and will often experience disadvantage in terms of educational achievement and health outcomes as well as adversity in their experiences of being parented. It is important that they receive the right help and support at the right time.

Consultation:

Children with child protection plans and their parents/carers are encouraged to

participate in the planning and decision-making process.

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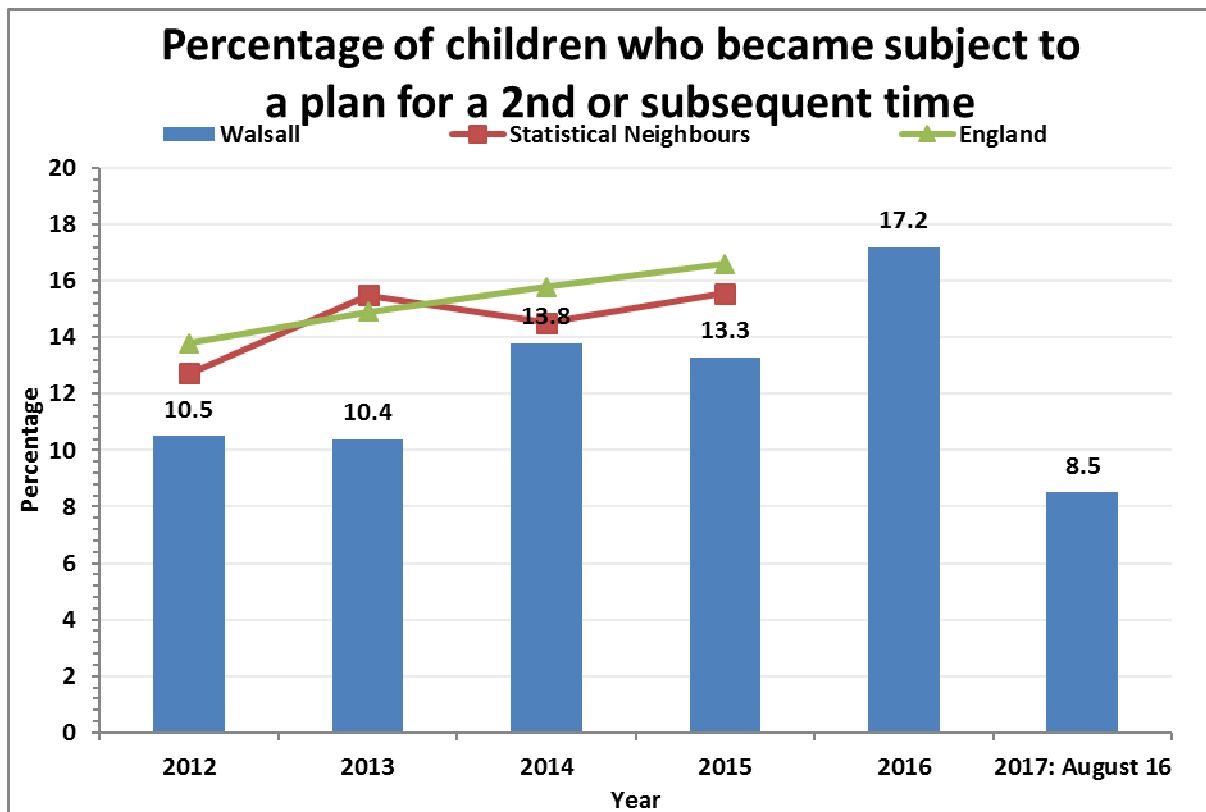
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1. Background and Context

1.1 Diagram 1 below provides information about the percentage of child protection listed children in Walsall who have been on a plan two or more times. The data shows year by year figures from 2012 to the present. It gives a comparison with data for England and Statistical Neighbours for the first three years of the period

Diagram 1

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17: August 16
Walsall	10.5	10.4	13.8	13.3	17.2	8.5
Statistical Neighbours	12.7	15.5	14.5	15.6		
England	13.8	14.9	15.8	16.6		



1.2 The data shows that between April 2012 and April 2015 Walsall performed better than Statistical Neighbours and the National average, with a lower percentage of children subject to a second or subsequent period of child protection planning. During this period the percentage in Walsall fluctuates between 10.4% and 13.8%

1.3 Between April 15 and April 16 the figure in Walsall increases to 17.2%. Whilst data for Statistical Neighbours and England is not yet available the increase in Walsall in this 12 month period needs to be understood and challenged.

1.4 From 1 April 2016 to the present time the data shows a significant reduction in the percentage of children made subject to a second or subsequent child protection plan with the figure currently at 8.5%.

1.5 Out of the 22 children who make up this figure of 8.5%, 9 were taken off child protection plans less than two years before the most recent intervention. The shorter the gap the higher the concern that the previous work with the family was not successful.

2 Audit

2.1 To gain a better understanding of the local context and the impact of repeat child protection plans on children an audit was carried out in June 2016. This looked at 8 cases involving 26 children.

2.2 A series of key themes emerged from the audit.

- 2.3 Neglect and domestic abuse feature in the lives of all of the children.
- 2.4 The files evidence extensive professional activity in terms of meetings, assessments, agreements, visits and support planning. There are also cases where it was difficult to determine the intervention that would result in change for the child and where the intervention had minimal impact.
- 2.5 This is linked to cycles of improvement followed by subsequent deterioration in the care experienced by the children.
- 2.6 The records did not always provide enough information about the children's home lives or the direct work undertaken with the children.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 There is a strong focus on improving outcomes for children and young people, which has sustained and embedded change. All managers are participating in training designed to promote and enable this. There is a mandatory training plan for all social workers with an emphasis on direct work with children and families; a relationship- based approach.
- 3.2 There is now senior management oversight of all decisions to arrange a Child Protection Conference when the child has previously been the subject of a plan. The relevant Group Manager must authorise each decision.
- 3.3 Whilst the statistics for recent months show improved performance, we will never lose sight of the children behind the statistics, and if a child needs a second or subsequent plan to keep them safe the child protection process will be appropriate. There will be continuing monitoring and review of this area of work.

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