

Action Tracker

Childrens Services Improvement Board April 2020

Last Updated

25/04/2020



Meeting ID	Ref No.	Raised by	Report	Issue	Comment/Question	Assigned To	Response Submitted	Status	Completion Date
	0001	Alisa Newman	Vital Signs	Performance	Still a lack of sustained performance although some areas are showing a slight improvement it is not consistent.		Comment noted.		
	0002	Alisa Newman	Vital Signs	NFA	Noted re contact to NFA rate and echo Jane B's comments. Re referrals; the volume of referrals we have is now understood to be what we would expect against our SNs but I can't see how we compare with our SNs for our conversion rate...it might be helpful.	Amandip Johal	As part of the E2E review of Systems that has been completed; a recommendation has been made to place all contacts in the Early Help Module for triage ahead of a review decision. The go-live of this new pathway is scheduled to be April/ May 2020. The expected go live date is 21st April 2020.		
	0003	Alisa Newman	Audit	Moderation	It will be interesting to see if there is a significant difference to the ratings after moderation. If the dip sample is representative of quality of practice, how many of the total current open case files would currently be I or RI?	Amandip Johal	The next report can provide the required overview about moderations which will help to provide a detailed response to the above. The January moderations had not been done when the report was submitted – an analysis of the moderations for all audits will enable us to pick out themes and provide a better overview regarding quality of practice		
	0004	Ali-Jan Haider	Vital Signs	Early Help	Good to see the activity in early help increasing,	Phil Hayden	Comment noted.		
	0005	Ali-Jan Haider	Vital Signs	Early Help	What does a good early help offer look like – are we able to benchmark in accordance with our population and our demography?	Phil Hayden	<p>Early help' in relation to children and families by definition will be the response before the need for Children's Social Care (Level 3 response on the continuum of need). The development work through the projects relates specifically to the role of the Early Help Co-ordinators and support to partner agencies to take on the Lead Practitioner role. The 'offer' to children and families will therefore be determined by the needs of each family and the effective response of services combined to those identified needs i.e. each package will be different to each family. In terms of benchmarking - there is no national benchmark for Early Help at level 3 although there has been some research that could determine the numbers of children and young people we may expect at any time in a child life requiring this level of support.</p> <p>As we move out of the current situation it will be the role of the Prevention and Early Help Partnership for Children and Families to support the development of a Strategy, within the context of an all age approach, for Prevention and response to more complex needs (Early Help). This should take account of the approach and features of prevention work and how an effective response at level 3 is working against the needs and demand assessment.</p>		
	0006	Ali-Jan Haider	Audit	Supervision	Supervision plays a role both in ensuring that the focus on child centred practice is at the heart of the work and also provides the member of the staff with an essential critique offering confidence and a chance to both learn and develop.	Amandip/ Traci Taylor	The new training will address this and will be mandatory for all managers.		
	0007	Ali-Jan Haider	Audit	CPP	Rate of children subject to child protection procedures in coming down	Amandip Johal	Comment noted.		
	0008	Ali-Jan Haider	Audit	Supervision	Under the section, organisational learning; what does the report mean when it intimates a continued concern in terms of both 'quality' and 'fit' as these are both quite broad descriptors.	Amandip Johal	This is about the supervision process recognising that what we have at the moment is not working; this has led into a review of the supervision policy to look at identifying what will support good practice and how we provide oversight over cases.		
	0009	Ali-Jan Haider	Vital Signs	Recruitment and retention	Do we still have more social workers leaving than joining? Impact, reasons, plans to turn this around if the current plan is not working?	Caroine Brain	<p>Caroline to answer please.</p> <p>A deep dive on recruitment and retention to be presented to the next Improvement Board.</p>		
	0010	Jane Booth	Vital Signs	NFA	<p>Re side on contact break down – shows continuing high level of NFA. Reflects on well rehearsed issue of coding – this has been a concern for us for at least a year now.</p> <p>We keep being told this is being resolved – when will we see evidence of this?</p>	Irfan Alam	As part of the E2E review of Systems that has been completed; a recommendation has been made to place all contacts in the Early Help Module for triage ahead of a review decision. The go-live of this new pathway is scheduled to be April/ May 2020. The expected go live date is 21st April 2020.		
	0011	Jane Booth	Vital Signs	NFA	<p>Also in this group (contact break down) are cases where agencies are said not be getting consent leading to a case being closed as NFA – this sounds like a potential high risk response.</p> <p>Why are we not sending these back for consent and tracking the outcome to risk assess if no response?</p>	Irfan Alam	<p>Where cases do not meet the threshold for Early Help; alternative closure reasons have been designed to replace the NFA closure code. These will include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not meet threshold for Early Help • Information advice and Guidance provided to families • Consent not Obtained • Referral to other appropriate body <p>Nuanced reporting to provide further granularity to cases which do not meet threshold will be reported on following the first full month of the new pathway being embedded into the front door.</p> <p>The addition of the 'consent not obtained' closure code will allow us to drill down into specific data where people have been sent away to get consent. This will then form foundations to review and track these cases moving forward.</p>		

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	0012	Jane Booth	Vital Signs	Early Help coordinators	Description of impact of the 4 EH coordinators very positive. Presume Covid -19 restrictions will impact recruitment of the rest?	Phil Hayden	<p>The Early Help co-ordinators pilot stage is now completed and the rollout of the provision is underway with the learning of the last few months. The initial 4 EH co-ordinators have been supporting a number of schools throughout the district to start to establish the role of the lead practitioner and will support their new colleagues through lessons learnt from the pilot.</p> <p>We have recruited 8 more co-ordinators, who started this week (20th April), taking the total to 12 across the district. Lockdown is making progress slower but we have some good examples of the Early Help co-ordinators working jointly with schools and other agencies to make a difference to children and families. This is part of the immediate response work for vulnerable children during Covid, bringing much needed capacity at this time. The newly recruited staff are being inducted and are working closely with the already established 4 EH coordinators to support schools and families in offering as much support as they can at this current time.</p> <p>We have, as yet, only shared some information with partners as we formulated the practice model from the pilot work. Moving forward we are working on the methodology, training and on-going support for the lead practitioner role, which has been informed from our recent learning and from good practice examples elsewhere. This will be available through the training and one to one support with partners when the Early Help Co-ordinators are fully operational.</p> <p>If anyone has questions / concerns / comments about the new role, function or process they can of course contact their Family Hub Manager to discuss or Cath Dew, Service Manager for Early Help.</p>		
	0013	Jane Booth	Audit Report	Supervision	Still lots of issues re supervision and not that much progress – 38% with big gaps and slightly more with smaller gaps and other inadequacies. Does this need a more challenging approach?	Amandip Johal	<p>The supervision policy is in the process of being reviewed and new training is being developed to address the quality of supervision with managers.</p> <p>HoS are challenged about the performance with regards to supervisions in weekly meetings by the deputy director.</p> <p>The performance data for week commencing 13.04.2020 shows that supervisions are recorded on 86.6% of all case files across the district.</p>		
	0014	Jane Booth	Audit Report	Placements	Worrying stats re children placed with parents – more than 50% inadequate with agreements not on file and poor plans. Can this group be prioritised?	Amandip Johal	<p>This has been prioritised with the project team being allocated children who are ready to have their care order discharged. The team at the moment have 50 cases for which they are completing assessments with a view to either discharging the care order or updating the plan with a clear exit strategy. In addition, permanence trackers are also in place which reviews arrangements for children including those who are placed at home with their parents to ensure that there are safe arrangements in place including a plan to support the care order being discharged.</p>		
	0015	Jane Booth	Audit Report	Unregulated settings	In the section on contingency planning there is reference to going in to unregulated settings – contrary to assurances we have been given. Are children still being placed in unregulated settings?	Amandip Johal	<p>No new placements are unregulated; as we are reviewing older cases any identified placements that are not regulated are being addressed and managed as required – case notes have been added to files to capture the decision making process and any identified issues / actions.</p>		
	0016	Jane Booth	Audit Report	Children with Disabilities	Section of Children with Disabilities flagged lots of poor practice. Can we have a more detailed report on specific improvements planned for this service area?	Amandip Johal	<p>Noted on forward plan - report author tbc and date of report tbc A plan will be made available to address the learning identified for the 1 May 2020.</p>		
	0017	Jane Booth	Audit Report	Conclusions and recommendations section 4	Section 4 flags many things we have seen before. Do we know why previous actions have not worked?	Amandip Johal	<p>High turnover of staff has continued to be a challenge. We now have a permanent structure in place for HoS and SM; Interviews are scheduled for TMs posts which will support staff being supported to improve practice.</p> <p>A number of practice supervisor roles have been successfully recruited (ongoing recruitment) and they will provide additional support to all staff in terms of practice and improving the quality of our work with children and families.</p> <p>We are continuing to recruit to stabilise the workforce.</p>		
	0018	Clr Adrian Farley	Vital Signs	Front Door timeliness	Concern with the timeliness of contacts at the Front Door data. This seems to be around 60%. The pattern is showing that contacts are not happening as quickly as before. No questions as Clr Farley has raised these specifically with Mark Douglas and/or Irfan Alam.	Irfan/Nabeel	<p>There is some work being undertaken in the front door to streamline the recording system (set to go live next week) and to realign some of the staff teams so we are working at full capacity. Last week, 89% of contacts were completed in 1 working day however there is still much more work to do to embed this and ensure it's a more consistent picture</p>		
	0019	Clr Adrian Farley	Vital Signs	Careloads	Careloads around 20 – a concern that there is slight increase.	Irfan Alam	Noted		

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	0020	Cllr Adrian Farley	Vital Signs	Compliance	Pleased to note that compliance is now at 78% (up from 40%). Need to see further grip around quality and compliance.	Mark Douglas /Irfan Alam	No response required as spoken to Mark and Irfan.		
	0022	Cllr Adrian Farley	Vital Signs	Staff mental Health issues	Around 50% of Children's Services colleagues are off work with a mental health condition. Not all is work related; but 27% is. What systems are in place to support those off work with work related stress?	Jule Cowell	See attached note in accompanying email to this spreadsheet.		
	0023	Heather Lacey	Programme Highlight Report	Early Help Pilot	Early Help Pilot – Information needs sharing about what this is about. Had a visit from Sheila Truman who is herself unsure what her role is. It was useful to be given a list of places we could access however it feels the emphasis is being placed on schools again to make referrals and sort out.	Phil Hayden	We appreciate we need to do more work as we move forward with the new role of the Early Help Co-ordinators. The pilot work with 4 co-ordinators proved effective and the information gathered is helping to shape the support schools and other partners have requested as their agencies take on the Lead Practitioner role. If anyone has questions / concerns / comments about the new role, function or process they can of course contact their Family Hub Manager to discuss or Cath Dew, Service Manager for Early Help.		
	0024	Heather Lacey	Vital Signs		More notice is needed for conference calls as sometimes we are given less than 5 minutes notice.	All	Comment noted.		
	0025	Heather Lacey	Vital Signs	Assessments late	Assessments are not being completed in the time frames.	Amandip Johal	The audits and our own overview as Heads of Service has identified that the current assessment template is not fit for purpose as it does not support good practice – a new template is being devised and will be launched with clear expectations regarding completion and timescales. This is also linked to the revised version of practice standards that has been completed – the updated version has been completed and is with comms to pull together in a booklet in prep for re-launch. Training has also been commissioned to support managers to look at how they support and challenge staff with regards to quality assurance, timeliness and accountability to improve standards of work. This training will be available for all managers when the lockdown has been lifted.		
	0026	Heather Lacey	Vital Signs	Repeat referrals	Social workers are having to repeat referrals to other services even if they have been agreed in meetings i.e. intensive family support.	Irfan Alam	This is wrapped up in the end to end review of LCS, so that we can streamline the process for accessing support from other parts of the service. The End 2 End Review has now been completed and the findings are to be reviewed by senior officers to formulate an IT Programme to improve the quality of systems. A further update on the timelines and contents of the Programme will be provided in an update to the Improvement Board in May / June		
	0027	Heather Lacey	Vital Signs	Consent and MARF forms	More guidance needs to be given to headteachers around consent and clear reasons why MARF forms have not been taken any further if closed.	Lawrence Bone	There is clear guidance on when consent is required to make referrals (Lawrence provided the links). If a MARF is not accepted due to there being no consent then the referrer will be provided feedback in relation to this (and usually asked to go and seek consent before referring). We are building in an option onto our contact form at the point of closure where it allows us to tick 'no consent' as the primary reason for closure. This will allow us to pull data, track and review these cases moving forward. Again the form is set to go live next week and is in its final stages. In terms of consent there is guidance on page 8 of the MARF Guidance on the Safer Bradford site https://www.saferbradford.co.uk/media/xyih2owx/bradford-marf-guidance-with-sos.docx and in the information sharing and consent policy https://www.saferbradford.co.uk/media/towhvcog/bscb-consent-and-information-sharing-policy-final-feb-2019-1.doc		
	0027	Heather Lacey	Vital Signs	Multiple Social Workers	Still issues with some families having multiple social workers who do not know the background history. There needs to be more trust with educational professionals and if we are contacting social workers with concerns these need taking seriously.	Irfan Alam	We are addressing this by pro-actively streamlining our recruitment activity to get more permanent staff and reduce agency staff. A stable workforce will reduce the multiple social workers some children and families have unfortunately experienced. We are now in a position to offer interviews on a weekly basis and have successfully employed, over the past few weeks, 5 Team Managers; 13 Practice Supervisors and 13 Newly Qualified Social Workers with interviews planned over the next 2 weeks for Team Managers, Practice Supervisors, Experienced social workers and newly qualified workers. Our practice standards have been revised setting out clear expectations about the standard of care and practice we expect for our children, young people and their families. The Practice Supervisors have a development coaching and training role and will work closely with the PSW to improve practice across the board. Additionally we are reviewing all our training including in a multi-agency way so that everyone understands roles and responsibilities and that should address any issues around education professionals not feeling listened to.		

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	0029	Heather Lacey	Audit report	Social Work	Need to make sure new social workers are aware of expectations in Bradford. There are a lot of people arriving from different authorities – Manchester particularly. They have been thrown in the deep end without clear guidance sometimes and myself and other heads have had to guide them in how to deal with challenging situations or chronology of families for example. This can be embarrassing when in child protection conferences when information presented is wrong.	Amandip Johal	Agree. This is part of the work that is taking place with workforce development with regards to looking at mandatory training as well as ongoing training. Training is being written / adapted to ensure that all new workers understand the expectations from the onset regarding areas such as case management, assessments and working with children and families. All policy and procedures are also being updated with new practice guidance's being developed and shared. This will also improve once we have a stable and permanent workforce – work continues with regards to recruitment and retention.		
	0030	Heather Lacey	Programme Highlight Report	Action	Need to make sure what is written is actually happening in reality to ensure consistency.	Phil Hayden	Comment noted		
	0031	Heather Lacey	AOB	Reporting safeguarding issues	Members of the public reporting safeguarding issues – It was brought to my attention by a parent that they had tried to report an incident to social care they had witnessed between a parent and a child from another school. They were able to say the name of the school and what the child had been told but did not know any other details. They were told that they would need the school address and date of birth in order to take it any further. Surely having the school details and name would allow social care to investigate further?	Mariam Haque	The report will have been made to the front door who can contact my service if they are unable to find details about the address of a school – this seems unlikely to be an issue as all school addresses are available on line via the school website.		
	0032	Stuart Smith	Highlight report	Refreshed Improvement Plan	I see the Improvement Plan is to be reviewed and that each Head of Service will review the sections that they hold responsibility for, it would be good to receive any amendments and updates to the plan that result from this, thanks.	Phil Hayden	The revised Ofsted Improvement Plan is being informed through two key strands of work a) Project deliverables from the Four Programme of improvement supported by the Programme Management Team (PMT) with Irfan Alam and b) Individual self evaluations (SEF's) by HoS, which are being rolled out this month. Actions from the previous Ofsted action plan with areas for improvement from the four monitoring visits are informing the HoS SEF's and all resulting actions are being included in the new revised Ofsted action plan; along with the milestones from the projects. An update on this will be available in the next highlight report		
	0033	Stuart Smith	Highlight report	e case management system	I note considerable updating of the e case management system with new template forms for most plans and assessments. It would be good to hear how this progresses in a future Highlight report.	Amandip?	Noted on forward plan - report author tbc and date of report tbc Stu Barrett has been collating feedback and reviewing LCS to look at how the system can be adapted to improve practice so that it is not barrier good practice. Amandip is happy to liaise with Stu to look at how we can pull together a paper for the board that will provide the update regarding the proposed changes, timescales and other work that is taking place to improve systems.		
	0034	Stuart Smith	Highlight report	Management oversight	I see also that the next stage of the improved management oversight would (under normal circumstances) focus on recruitment of Team Leaders, Practice supervisors and additional business support to social workers. I wonder what if any progress can be made in this regard in the current circumstances? I think the advertisement for Practice Supervisors was about to go out or was just out about the time of the lockdown, can you let me know where this stage of recruitment is or has all such activity had to be put on pause for now?	Caroline Brain	A report will be presented at the next Improvement Board meeting in June.		
	0035	Stuart Smith	Highlight report	Retention payment option	I see also in the highlight report that the LA is considering the "Golden Hello" concept as part of the recruitment effort. Personally I have had more success with the concept of a retention payment, the model I have used also ties the payment to consistent supervision and sickness absence controls – quite happy to provide details if you are interested.	Caroline Brain	A report will be presented at the next Improvement Board meeting in June.		