

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**11 JANUARY 2018**

### **ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ADULT SERVICES**

Report from: Councillor David Brake, Portfolio Holder for Adult Services

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#### **Summary**

This report details the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services. The areas within the portfolio are listed each time a Cabinet Member is invited to attend any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be held to account.

It provides details on the services provided by the Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Service, which has responsibility for the chairing of statutory reviews of Looked After Children, and the chairing of multi-disciplinary meetings in relation to children who are the subject of a child protection plan.

#### **1. Background**

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, according to the Council's constitution are:

- Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Service

#### **2. Demand**

2.1 During 2017 the demand on the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and Child Protection (CP) Chair team has remained relatively stable. The table below illustrates:

	<b>Number of Looked After Children</b>	<b>Number of Children Subject to Child Protection Plan</b>
November 2016	404	323
November 2017	408	326

- 2.2 The stability of these figures indicates that there is a consistent application of threshold in relation to the risks children and young people are being exposed to as well as indicating strength in consistent social work practice in protecting children and young people.
- 2.3 In relation to Looked After Children (LAC) reviews it is essential that young people participate in these meetings and gain a sense of control and empowerment in relation to decisions made about their lives. As of November 2017 95% of LAC reviews included participation of children and young people using a variety of media, attendance at meetings, consultation forms, use of advocates and so on, and this has remained consistent since last year. In addition the IRO visits young people in between reviews. As of November 2017, 65% of young people were visited in between reviews; however, this has slightly reduced since last year due to recent capacity issues. It is anticipated that this will be an improving picture with full complement of staff. It is important to note that young people are able to decline these visits and this would have an impact of the percentage of visits.

### 3. Performance

Performance Indicator	2015	2016	2017
Average IRO / CP Chair Caseload	87	64	77
% children whose ICPC was held within 15 working days of strategy discussion	93	87	78
% LAC reviews completed within time period	97	97	95
Number of reviews completed	2198	2033	1840

#### 3.1 Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) Timescales

- 3.1.1 The current performance is at 78% as compared to 88% the previous year; the late conferences are as a result of capacity issues in the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service over the summer period resulting in conferences being scheduled 1 or 2 days late.
- 3.1.2 There had been staffing issues due a full time member of staff commencing long term sick leave and this post needing to be covered by an agency member of staff; coupled with staffing shortages within the administration support team. A further issue has been Transfer in Conferences from other Local Authorities and clarity being needed in relation to the process for these. This is being discussed and agreed at Operational Manager level with Children's Services to ensure a smooth and timely process for the transfer of cases across local authorities.
- 3.1.3 The staffing issues have been a challenge to service delivery but are anticipated to be resolved in the early part of the New Year, with a current recruitment campaign to recruit three permanent IROs.

## **3.2 LAC review Timescale**

3.2.1 Whilst we are meeting the target in relation to this performance indicator it has reduced from 97% to 95%, this is in relation to recording issues on the casework management system. These will be rectified by February 2018 at which point this indicator will increase to being higher than it is currently.

## **3.3 Average IRO / CP Chair Caseload**

3.3.1 This has increased to 77 this year from 64 in 2016; this increase is due to 1.5 FTE staff members leaving the team and not being replaced due to budgetary restraints. The IRO's and CP Chairs are confident that they are able to manage these caseloads and carry out their statutory duties for children and young people in Medway.

## **3.4 Dispute Resolutions**

3.4.1 A key role of the IRO is to raise alerts and challenges when there appears to be drift and delay in care planning, poor practice or poor decision making. Over the past year the IRO service has continued to focus on improving the efficiency of these alerts, as a result, the number of alerts raised has significantly increased. IRO's are keenly aware of the progress of the children allocated to them and are stronger in acting as the Local Authority's challenge.

## **4. Capacity and Staff Establishment**

4.1 The IRO team has continued to significantly reduce their reliance on agency staff over this past year, and the team is currently made up of 60% permanent staff. There are currently 4 locums employed within the service, 3 of which have been employed as a locum in Medway for over 2 years, despite being locum, they are consistent figures for the children and young people they serve. The further locum is employed on a temporary contract to cover a permanent team member's long term sickness absence.

4.2 The team has remained stable in its establishment, however the recruitment to the three agency posts remains challenging, and there are current recruitment campaigns to resolve this. Consequently, there is a budget forecast overspend for 2017/18 of around £107,000 on IRO staffing relating to continued use of agency staff to cover vacant posts and long term sickness cover.

4.3 The Operational Manager within the IRO service continues to be a permanent post and has been consistent for over 3 years; this has contributed significantly to the embedding of good practice within the service and will ensure that future changes are managed so that there is minimal impact upon children and young people.

## **5. Innovation within the service delivery**

5.1 Over the last six months Children Services have implemented the Mind of My Own app which was led by the Operational Manager of IRO service.

- 5.2 MOMO is an app-led suite of products and services that modernises the processes and systems used to gather the views of children and young people using social care services. It helps young people create a structured 'MOMOdoc', a statement of their views in relation to events and situations they encounter. At the same time it helps workers capture and evidence their views, ensuring they are being heard and considered while also meeting quality standards around the voice of the child. This service is available to Looked after Children and those subject to Child Protection plans with parental consent having been obtained.
- 5.3 To date we have received 175 statements which is a very good result and appear that Medway has excelled in the implementation of this communication practice with young people, and is one of the higher scoring local authorities nationally.
- 5.4 The service plans to introduce MoMo Express in the New Year, which is a bespoke app for children and young people with learning and additional needs.
- 5.5 The IRO service have introduced a national good practice model in the development of a Fostering IRO, with the responsibility for annual reviews for Medway foster carers and completing any Standards of Care reviews in regards to any allegations or concerns raised about a foster carer's conduct. This provides an objective and impartial review which has been received positively across Children's service and directly from foster carers.

## **6. Future Plans**

- 6.1 The service is currently under review to explore the possibility to divide the function of the IRO and CP Chair role into two distinct teams. This will enable those working within each team to specialise in a particular field as well as significantly increasing capacity and efficiency within the service as a whole. Therefore, the advice and support will be targeted to the children subject to plan or are looked after by Medway Council and enhance the quality of service offered to children and their families, as well as colleague professionals. It is also anticipated that there will be regional and national liaison with IROs and CP chairs from other local authorities to share experiences and knowledge to develop a shared identity across both specialisms.

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### **Appendices**

None

### **Background papers**

None