

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

**10 JANUARY 2019**

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

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

Author: Christine Impey, Head of QA and Safeguarding

#### **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 2018 the demand on the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and Child Protection (CP) Chair team has increased, albeit very slightly. The table below illustrates:

	<b>Number of Looked After Children</b>	<b>Number of Children Subject to Child Protection Plan</b>
October 2017	408	328
October 2018	420	356

- 2.2 The relative 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 October 2018 93% 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 October 2018, 72% of young people were visited in between reviews; this is an increase of 7% from November 2017, despite the staffing issues reported to below. It is anticipated that this will be a further improving picture with full complement of a permanent staff team. 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

- 3.1 In September 2018 the service separated to Child Protection and Looked After Children service resulting in staff within the service holding caseloads of either child protection or looked after children. This separation was brought into place to afford staff the opportunity to specialize in their particular areas, thereby bring strength to the quality assurance and challenge aspect to the role. Due to this separation it is difficult to quantify caseloads.
- 3.2 In line with the separation of the service, Child Protection caseloads are measured per “family” as opposed to Looked After Children which are measured “per child”.

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
Average IRO / CP Chair Caseload	64	77	80
% children whose ICPC was held within 15 working days of strategy discussion	93	87	68
% LAC reviews completed within time period	97	95	92

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

- 3.3.1 The current performance is at 68% as compared to 78% the previous year; the late conferences are as a result of late notification of the need for a conference to the IRO service. If the service are not informed this is required in a timely manner, there will be a risk these will be scheduled outside of the 15 day timescale. This late scheduling as a result of late notification indicates both capacity within the service and, more importantly, respect to the family to prepare and digest the information from the social work teams prior to the conference.

3.3.2 There had been staffing issues again this year. Whilst the service has separated, causing inevitable changes there was also 1 full time team member remaining on long term sickness absence and 2 other full time IRO's resigned, leaving in October and November respectively. In order to resolve this there has been an active recruitment campaign, this has been successful in relation to IRO's which will be fully staffed by permanent employees from February 2019, with only a part time vacancy staffed by a locum who has been employed in Medway since 2013. In relation to the Child Protection Service this is currently largely staffed by locum workers, with 3 full time agency staff (albeit longstanding agency staff) and a part time permanent worker. An active recruitment campaign for Child Protection Chairs, on a permanent contract, commences from January 2019.

### **3.4 LAC review Timescale**

3.4.1 Whilst we are meeting the target in relation to this performance indicator it has reduced from 95% to 92%, this is in relation to ongoing recording issues on the casework management system as well as staffing issues reported above. These will be rectified by March 2019 at which point this indicator will increase to being higher than it is currently.

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

3.5.1 As stated above this is difficult to quantify at this stage due to the very recent separation of the service into 2 distinct services, namely child protection and looked after children. It is important to note that the caseloads for IRO's, responsible for looked after children, remains largely within Practice Guidance from the IRO Handbook of 50-70 with the highest caseload for an IRO being at 73 and for Child Protection Chairs this is 136 ( children).

3.5.2 The CP Conference chair team consists of 4 CP chairs and each have a targeted caseload of 90 families, which is calculated on holding an average of 6 CP conferences per week.

### **3.6 Dispute Resolutions**

3.6.1 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 well as creating a specific "episode" within the case management system so these can be accurately reported on a monthly basis. Over the past 12 months the number of these alerts has remained fairly static, although it is important to note that the response to the from Children's Services is more timely and the alerts are widely accepted.

3.6.2 In addition to alerts and challenges there has been an increased focus on improving the IRO footprint on a child's file to evidence the impact on a child's journey from the IRO.

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

4.1 The IRO team has continued to focus significantly reducing their reliance on agency staff over this past year, although the team is currently made up of

51% permanent staff. This is a reduction from 60% at this time last year due to resignations and long term sickness absence. As stated above there is an active recruitment campaign to decrease the use of agency staff within the next year. There are currently 5 locums employed within the services, 3 of which have been employed as a locum in Medway for over 3 years, despite being locum, they are consistent figures for the children and young people they serve. The 2 further locums are employed on a temporary contract to cover a permanent team member's long term sickness absence and a short term contract until a recruited permanent member of staff serves their notice period in their current employment.

- 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 2018/19 of around £270,000 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 4 years; this has contributed significantly to the embedding of good practice. Unfortunately, the manager resigned in November 2018 and will leave the post in January 2019. Recruitment to this post is underway.

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

- 5.1 Over the last eighteen 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 over 400 statements which is a very good result and appear that Medway has excelled in the implementation of this communication practice with young people, and continues to be 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. It is accepted there has been significant delays in implementing MOMO Express, this is as a direct result of funding negotiations between different departments within Children's Services. However, this has now been agreed and MOMO Express will be launched in March 2019.
- 5.5 The IRO service have maintained 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. Significantly, this post has been agreed as a permanent post over the past 6 months.

**Lead officer contact**

Christine Impey, Head of QA and Safeguarding  
Tel: 01634 334001 Email: christine.impey@medway.gov.uk

**Appendices**

None

**Background papers**

None