

**Children and Young Peoples Service  
Overview and Scrutiny**

**28 March 2019**

**Pre birth intervention Team**



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**Report of Margaret Whellans, Corporate Director Children and  
Young People's Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide an update of the work being undertaken within the Pre-birth intervention team and their performance.
- 2 To provide an update on the work undertaken by the Pre-birth team to improve pre birth work across children's services
- 3 To provide an update on the interface with the Pause Program

**Executive Summary**

- 4 The pre-birth team has been working with families since May 2018. The team works with parents who have had their older children permanently removed from their care by a Local Authority and become pregnant again.
- 5 Experienced Social Workers work alongside Early Help practitioners from the One Point Service, to deliver intensive support and assessment to support parents to safely care for their children or gather evidence to make timely decisions in relation to permanence plans.

**Recommendations**

- 6 Children and Young People Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:
  - (a) Note content of report

## **Pre-birth team performance**

### **Outcomes for Children**

- 7 To date the team have received 64 referrals. Of those referrals 56 families have progressed to receive work from the pre-birth team.
- 8 3 of those did not receive a service as the pregnancies did not progress, the other 5 families did not meet the criteria and were transferred to the Families First teams.
- 9 2 families moved out of the area following the conclusion of the pre birth assessment and those cases were transferred to the new Local Authority with a clear plan for those babies.
- 10 The team are actively working with 54 families, 29 of those are in the pre-birth assessment stage and plans have not yet been determined, 3 remain unborn and are on a child protection plan.
- 11 22 babies have been born, 1 has recently closed to the team following a positive pre-birth and post birth assessment. That baby has been in parents care from birth and remained a Child In Need case throughout, the parents continue to have support from universal services.
- 12 Babies have been placed in parents care from birth, 3 are on a child protection plan and 6 are now child in need status.
- 13 Babies are out of parental care, 4 of these are with family members where they will remain long term, 7 are in foster care whilst post birth assessments are completed and 1 is in a fostering to adopt placement.

## **Caseloads**

- 14 All staff are working within the agreed caseload parameters of 10-12 children per worker, with the Social Work Consultant holding 6 cases alongside her Social Work Consultant role.

## **Performance**

- 15 In terms of performance all work completed to date has been within timescales. All pre birth assessments have been completed within the 45 day timescales.
- 16 All families receive a post birth assessment but the time set is based upon the plan for the baby in order to prevent any unnecessary delay in care planning. Post birth assessment timescales are decided at the conclusion of the pre-birth assessment, with a maximum being 45 days from the date of birth. All of these assessments have been completed within the agreed timescale. This means there has been no drift and delay in relation to the care planning for babies open to the team.

- 17 100% of statutory visits have been completed within timescales.
- 18 All ICPC, RCPC and LAC conferences have been completed within timescales.
- 19 In the recent focussed Ofsted inspection the pre-birth team were specifically highlighted for their good practice and positive impact on children's services.

## **Governance**

- 20 The pre birth operational group continues to meet bi monthly, there are representatives from internal services such as legal, fostering, First Contact, One Point and public health and external services such as housing, midwifery, substance misuse, domestic violence and Pause. The Operational group has been involved in the development of the service and continues to monitor the practice within the pre-birth team. The groups focus has now moved to include development of practice in pre-birth cases across the whole of children's services.

## **Work with the Families First Teams**

- 21 The pre-birth team has been requested to work with other teams to improve the practice in pre birth work across the whole of children's services in County Durham. Prior to this work starting it has been important for the pre birth team to develop their own knowledge and experience of using the pre birth intervention plan, assessment format and early permanence planning. Therefore this work has recently commenced.
- 22 The pre-birth management team are providing a level of management oversight on all pre-birth cases open to the Families First teams, this is to ensure assessments are completed in a timely way and clear plans are in place prior to baby's birth. There is a significant focus on ensuring early permanence planning is undertaken in all cases. If there are issues within the Families First cases they are highlight in a timely way so they can be rectified and given the priority they need. Social Workers from the pre-birth team can be added as a provision on the case in a consultative role, if Families First workers require additional support.
- 23 The pre-birth team has developed the pre and post birth assessment guidance to fit with the assessment proforma on the Liquid Logic system, this is to be circulated to all Families First staff as a good practice guide for completing these assessments.
- 24 Family Workers based within the Families First teams have been trained to deliver the intervention plan. Aspects of this intervention can be completed with all families with an unborn baby alongside the completion of a proportionate assessment.

- 25 The pre-birth team have been heavily involved in the development of the early permanence work that is currently being delivered to all staff in children's services with a focus on the specific action required with unborn and new born babies. The pre birth team is delivering training with all staff on this and will offer support to staff to ensure all decisions and made in a timely way and babies do not experience any delay.

### **Interface with the Pause Program**

- 26 Banardos were commissioned to deliver the Pause model to 16 women within County Durham. This program works with mothers who have had 2 or more children removed permanently from their care, before they become pregnant again. The aim of the service is to help mothers address their own individual issues before they become pregnant again, so that they stand a better chance of keeping their future babies. This may be supporting them to access services to address their mental health issues, self-esteem, relationship issues, substance misuse issues, housing etc. The pre-birth team has worked alongside the service to identify mothers to access the program so that they receive ongoing support once children have been removed and stand a better chance of breaking the cycle of having children removed repeatedly. To date the 16 women have been identified, 4 of these are now actively engaged with the service, they are using a long term contraception which will remain in place for the duration of the program. The remaining 12 are in the introductory stage of the work.
- 27 The staff hot desk alongside the pre-birth team, it is hoped knowledge and skills can be shared which will further enhance the post birth aspect of the intervention and support offered to parents by the team.
- 28 The Team Manager of the Pause program also sits on the pre-birth operational group to assist in the implementation of the model and develop links with other services across county Durham.

### **Conclusion**

- 29 In conclusion the pre-birth team are now fully embedded within children's services. The families open to the team are receiving and excellent service, this has been acknowledged by Ofsted in their recent focussed visit.
- 30 The team is now extending their focus to improve the practice across the whole of children services by developing good quality assessments guidance and training; providing training and tools for quality intervention with all parents of unborn babies open to children's services, providing management oversight on all unborn babies to ensure cases do not drift and that plans are clear, safe and specific. The team has also been part of developing the early permanence planning

across children's services and will continue to be involved with these cases to ensure all of these children and families receive a timely and safe service.

### **Background papers**

- None

### **Other useful documents**

- Previous Cabinet reports

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

none

### **Finance**

none

### **Consultation**

none

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

none

### **Human Rights**

none

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

### **Staffing**

No change

### **Accommodation**

No change

### **Risk**

none.

### **Procurement**

none