

Health and Wellbeing Board

14 May 2015



Children's Services Update

Report of Carole Payne, Head of Children's Services, Children and Adults Services, Durham County Council

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Health and Wellbeing Board on the national and local developments in relation to children's social care services.

Background

2. A report was presented to Durham County Council's Cabinet in November 2014 which provided information on the numerous national policy documents published by successive governments over the last 16 years, all pointing to a consistent strategic direction, towards early intervention and prevention alongside effective and rigorous protection of children and young people.
3. The report provided Durham County Council's Cabinet with an overview of the Children's inspection regime and an update on the transformation journey that has been undertaken in Children's Services in Durham.
4. It was agreed that further reports would be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board.

National Context

Child Sexual Exploitation: The Report of inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council - February 2015

5. In August 2014 Professor Alexis Jay published an Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham. The report, commissioned by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) as a review of its own practices, concluded that over 1400 children had been sexually exploited in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013. The vast majority of the perpetrators were said to be 'Asian' men.
6. In response, in September 2014, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government appointed Louise Casey to carry out an inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999. The inspection would assess the Council's compliance with the requirements of Part 1 of that Act, considering leadership and governance, scrutiny, services for children and young people, taxi and private hire licensing, and whether the council 'covers up' information.

7. The Casey inspection report found a council in denial about serious and on-going safeguarding failures and a failure to address past weaknesses, in particular in children's social care. It reported an archaic culture of sexism, bullying and discomfort around race and a culture of covering up uncomfortable truths, silencing whistle-blowers and paying off staff rather than dealing with difficult issues.
8. The report found ineffective leadership and management, including political leadership with no shared vision and ineffective liaisons with partners.
9. It also identified weak and ineffective arrangements for taxi licensing which leave the public at risk.
10. In March 2015 the government issued its response to the Jay report and laid out measures they would introduce to prevent the failures happening again. This includes a new whistleblowing national portal for child abuse related reports to bring child sexual exploitation to light and be able to spot patterns of failure across the country.
11. There will be a new national taskforce, and a centre of expertise, to support areas that are struggling to get it right.
12. There will be a consultation on an extension to the new 'wilful neglect' offence to children's social care, education and elected members. The criminal charge for wilful neglect is punishable by a maximum jail term of five years.
13. To help tackle offenders, child sexual abuse has been given the status of a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement so that this is prioritised by every police force.
14. In addition there will be an extra £7 million available in 2014/15 and 2015/16 to organisations which support those who have experienced sexual abuse.

Single Inspection Framework (SIF)

15. In late 2013, Ofsted introduced a new SIF for Children's Services, which covers children in need of help and protection, services for looked after children and care leavers, and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).
16. The SIF operates on a three-yearly cycle and the 'overall effectiveness' is judged as either outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate, as will each of the following judgements this is derived from:
 - The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection.
 - The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence, including two graded judgements:
 - Adoption
 - The experiences and progress of care leavers
 - Leadership, management and governance.

17. Benchmarking and learning from other Local Authorities who have already been subject to inspection by Ofsted under this framework continues in the service. To date, 43 Local Authorities have been inspected and had reports published. Of these, 10 (23%) have received an overall effectiveness judgement of 'good'. Three-quarters are rated below Ofsted's benchmark of 'good', with 26 (61%) judged to 'require improvement' and 7 (16%) as 'inadequate'. No local authorities have been judged as 'outstanding' under the SIF.
18. With regard to reviews of the LSCBs in 42 of the local authorities inspected under SIF, 12 have been judged to be 'good' (29%), 22 (52%) as 'requires improvement' and 8 (19%) as 'inadequate'. No LSCBs have been judged to be 'outstanding' under the SIF.
19. Benchmarking analysis of the inspections to date shows a declining trend from previous inspection judgements. The overall effectiveness judgement has decreased in 44% of all Local Authorities inspected (19) and remained the same in 16 (37%). The overall judgement has improved in 8 (19%).
20. Ofsted announced on 26 February 2015, that the proposed integrated inspection framework would not be implemented from April 2015, instead 'joint' inspections of Children's Services will begin in the autumn. The inspections will have a tight focus on how well agencies work together to protect children and address specific areas of concern, such as sexual exploitation of children and young people. It is anticipated that six inspections will take place before March 2016.
21. Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission as well as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation plan further consultation in the summer to refine the joint inspection model.

Children's Social Care Innovation Programme

22. The government has made £30m available in 2014/15 and further funding in 2015/16 to help children's professionals develop innovative ideas for reforming how children's social care is delivered.
23. The programme's key objective is to support improvements to the quality of services so that children who need help from the social care system have better chances in life.
24. The programme also seeks to help local authorities and other commissioners to get better value for public money spent to support vulnerable children and seeks to create conditions in which local systems are better able to innovate in future to drive sustained improvements in outcomes for vulnerable children.

Troubled Families

25. In June 2013, the Government announced plans to expand the Troubled Families Programme (known in County Durham as Stronger Families) for a further five years from 2015/16 and to reach up to an additional 400,000 families across England. This increased investment was aimed to support the Government's commitment to improve the lives of troubled families and as this work is taken to a significantly greater scale, to transform local public services and reduce costs for the long-term.
26. The Government announced in the Budget 2014 that it would offer the highest performing areas including Durham the opportunity to start delivery of the expanded Troubled Families Programme early, during 2014/15. These areas began delivery in September 2014 and worked intensively with the Troubled Families Team to implement and refine the operating model for the national roll out of the expanded Troubled Families Programme in April 2015.

Regional Context

27. There is a regional commitment to develop regional protocols for child sexual exploitation, including inter-agency information sharing.
28. Durham is represented on a regional workforce development group which was set up after the joint Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)/ Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) group agreed that they could better co-ordinate their efforts on workforce development.
29. The group is working towards a number of objectives including Step Up to Social Work (SUSW) which is an 18 month employment based pathway to social work qualification and work with children and families for high quality graduates. The region was successful in two bids for funding from the Department for Education, with the programme expected to commence in January 2016.
30. It is difficult to recruit high quality managers into social worker management posts. The workforce development group is planning a management development programme for potential managers/existing social work managers.

Local Context

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

31. The Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has prioritised work on child sexual exploitation since 2011.
32. Durham Constabulary, working to the direction of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Missing and Exploited sub group carried out an analysis of Child Sexual Exploitation covering the period April 2013 to March 2014. Across the North East, only Durham and Darlington have attempted analysis of this nature.

33. The analysis found that CSE generally involves the exploitation of children and young people by lone perpetrators, mostly white males under 30 years of age.
34. There were 124 young people referred under child protection procedures having displayed common risk factors associated with sexual exploitation. The majority of these referrals were for children considered at risk of exploitation, rather than known to have been the victim of actual abuse. Each of these young people has been referred to the First Contact Service, where an initial risk assessment has been undertaken, using a CSE risk matrix, to ascertain whether the child was at low, medium or high risk.
35. For those assessed at low risk, the referral has been passed to the One Point service for early help. Medium and high risk cases were allocated to the locality team manager of the Children's Services Assessment and Intervention teams to coordinate multi-agency support for each young person.
36. In the year April 2013 to March 2014, 21 young people received therapeutic support for CSE through a contract with Barnado's specialist CSE service, as a result of their being assessed as high risk or due to their known status as victims of CSE.
37. Taking a snapshot at the end of February 2015, there were 66 young people assessed as being at medium or high risk of CSE and of these, 19 were known to be victims. Of these, 13 young people are currently accessing Barnados therapeutic support for CSE.
38. The majority of referrals related to females (88%) and the most common age for a referral was 13 years.
39. The most significant threat to young people originates from the use of social media (25% of referrals) particularly involving the growth of various sites and apps which facilitate communication and the sharing of images.
40. Alcohol consumption by young people continues to be a common theme.
41. The LSCB has agreed a new Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy for 2014-2017 together with an Action Plan which outlines the key actions to be progressed to achieve the strategic aims within the Strategy of:
 - Prevent – making it more difficult to exploit children.
 - Protect – identifying and safeguarding children who are at risk.
 - Pursue – the offenders, disrupt and where possible prosecute their activity.
42. The Action Plan provides clarity in relation to strengthening leadership and improving the governance of the work to tackle CSE. It will ensure that training of professionals will be effective, co-ordinated and targeted and single and multi-agency processes and procedures are effective.

43. A multi-agency marketing strategy, called ERASE, has been developed to ensure that consistent and accurate messages are communicated to key stakeholders and there will be coordinated protection, support and guidance for CSE victims, and their families, as well as those at risk of CSE.
44. Progress of the strategy is monitored through the Action Plan, underpinned by a performance management framework. The Action Plan is used to provide periodic updates on progress to both the LSCB Missing and Exploited subgroup and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
45. Following the Casey report, Durham County Council has agreed to conduct a corporate review, to provide assurance on the activity and governance in place in the Council. This will be chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive.

Children's Social Care Innovation Programme

46. Durham was successful in two bids to the Children's Social Care Innovation Fund. The first was for £496,000 for a therapeutic support programme at Aycliffe secure centre for children that have been sexually exploited. This will offer targeted support in helping young people deal with trauma and in making the transition from the secure setting into more independent living.
47. The second successful bid was for £3.26 million to deliver on a large scale a new approach to social work and to work with families, building on the learning from past initiatives in Durham and elsewhere.
48. The current social care model can result in too many cases being worked at statutory levels and insufficient activity at lower levels, particularly where multi-agency family support is required.
49. Social work remains largely reactive and episodic, due to the volume of work and social workers do not always have the capacity to offer the intensive family support that is needed over a longer period of time.
50. The intention is to identify and meet the needs of children sooner, address the root causes of the problems and so reduce the numbers of families who are re-referred for support.
51. Durham will implement an approach to working with families that has been demonstrated to be effective and which is valued by families themselves.
52. The programme is underpinned by a significant programme of workforce development designed to create a new culture by developing new skills and attitudes, through training, mentoring, clinical consultation and challenge.

53. The main innovative elements of Durham's programme are:
- Creation of ten integrated early help and social work teams to create Innovation teams across the County, significantly increasing the range, access, quality and effectiveness of services for the whole family across the continuum of need.
 - Creation and development of third sector alliances in all areas of County Durham to build community capacity and sustainable change for families.
 - An intensive workforce development programme to support the new teams and the whole workforce.
 - Significantly enhanced service user engagement to change the relationship between professional and service user.
54. New team structures, roles and relationships will be implemented, building on the existing strengths of the workforce in County Durham. Extensive staff engagement will drive the change programme, as will the voice of service users.
55. Innovation Funding of £3.26 million will be used to enable rapid roll out of the programme, whilst minimising risk to existing statutory service delivery. Work to date has delivered a reduction in Looked After Children of 8% and a cost reduction of £2.5 million, against national and regional trends. This further investment is required in order to take the next step and to accelerate Durham's progress.
56. It is anticipated that the programme will deliver improved services and outcomes for the whole population of County Durham by the end of 2016 including a further 12% reduction in Looked After Children, a reduction in re-referrals to children's social care services and a reduction in child protection plans as a result of neglect.
57. Durham will realign the whole children's service workforce into five co-terminus areas of the county. Each area will have two Innovation Teams. This will include the current Assessment and Intervention social work service; the integrated One Point Service, which delivers universal and targeted services and the current Family Pathfinder Service, which delivers intensive whole family support.
58. The ten newly created Innovations teams, led by social workers, will work from the One Point hubs to ensure a seamless and fully integrated service for children and families regardless of their level of need.
59. Underpinning these arrangements is an aligned model of universal services, such as schools, community health services and voluntary and community sector organisations. It is their role to ensure that need is identified at the earliest point, so that early help can be provided. These services are already engaged through five early Help Forums.
60. Three child protection teams will continue working with children subject to child protection plans and children in care proceedings and a Looked After Children's Service will work with children with permanence plans.

61. The Innovation teams will support families who have complex needs and require intensive family support, but who do not need a child protection plan or to be Looked After.
62. In addition to the £2.5million already saved, as a result of reducing the number of Looked After Children by 8%, this model has the potential to reduce spending on Looked After Children (LAC) by a further 12% (£3.5million) in Durham, resulting in a total saving of £6 million. The approach has potential to establish a national precedent in good practice and were this to be replicated nationwide, a saving to the public purse of £688million could be delivered (based on March 2014 LAC rates).
63. Workforce support and development has been a key strength of our work to date and this will continue. The Stronger Families workforce development programme won the Children and Young People Now Staff Development award in 2014.
64. Building on this award winning approach, a workforce development programme has been developed to support implementation of this programme, and a mentoring programme is already in place.

Stronger Families

65. Durham is meeting its full target of 'turning around' 1,320 families by March 2015.
66. In August 2014, due to the successful implementation and delivery of Phase 1, Durham was invited to be one of the Early Starters for Phase 2 of the Troubled Families Programme. This new phase includes much broader criteria with locally derived outcome measures. Families must hit two of the six eligibility criteria below to be included on the programme:
 - Parents and children involved in crime or antisocial behaviour.
 - Children who have not been attending school regularly.
 - Children who need help.
 - Adults who are out of work or are at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness.
 - Families affected by domestic violence and abuse.
 - Parents and children with a range of health problems.
67. This broader set of criteria will enable the majority of families worked with by social care services to be part of the programme and to achieve results payments.
68. There is a very clear need to shift our focus to ensuring families are worked with in such a way that supports significant and sustained change. Phase 2 will be delivered over a 5 year time period and Durham will work with 4,330 families to within this period.

69. As part of being an early starter Durham was asked to deliver work to an additional 650 families by March 2015. Durham was also invited to be take part in the design and development of Phase 2 ready for national implementation in April 2015.

Next Steps

70. The delivery of the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2014-17 and Action Plan will continue with regular updates provided to the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
71. The first stage of the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme will start in one area of the county in June 2015. The second stage will follow in February 2016 with the final third stage starting in June 2016. All phases will be concluded by November 2016.
72. Durham will work with an additional 4,330 families as part of Phase 2 of the Stronger Families Programme.

Recommendations

73. The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
- Note the contents of this report.
 - Agree to receive further updates in relation to the transformation of Children's Services on a six monthly basis.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Substantial efficiencies have already been delivered through this approach as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Further efficiencies are planned. The successful bid to the Children's Innovation Fund will result in funding of £3.26m coming in to the authority to be used to develop new approaches to children's social care. As part of the Children's Innovation Fund an additional £496,000 bid was successful for a therapeutic support programme at Aycliffe secure centre for children that have been sexually exploited.

Staffing

Workforce development will benefit staff and will help to challenge thinking and introduce new ways of working into practice. Roles and responsibilities are being amended in line with revised requirements. Embedding culture change is dependent on staff working effectively and understanding service aims, supported by managers.

Risk

Changes need to be carefully managed to ensure the protection of children remains robust and the system is not de-stabilised during transition.

Risk to the safety of children and young people of failure to prevent CSE.

Major reputational risk to the Council of failure to prevent and address CSE.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The needs of vulnerable children and families will be better met through implementation of these changes

Accommodation

The innovation programme will require relocation and co-location of staff teams across the county, which will be managed within existing resources.

Crime and Disorder

Effective partnership working through the Safe Durham Partnership.

Human Rights

None

Consultation

Any changes to workforce will be subject to consultation with affected staff.

Procurement

None at this stage

Disability Issues

None at this stage

Legal Implications

There are a number of key policy developments/initiatives that have led the way and contributed to the Children's Services Transformation agenda in County Durham. All changes must be compliant with legal requirements