

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 27 January 2020

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director People

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Education & Social Care

**SUBJECT:** Children's Social Care Performance

**WARDS:** Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform members of the key areas of children's social care performance, outline how this is monitored and how Halton compares regionally and nationally.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members note the report.

## **3.0 CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE REPORTING**

### **National Statistical Reporting**

- 3.1 All local authorities report to the Department of Education to inform the Child In Need Annual Census and the 903 Children in Care Return, the results of which are published every October on the DfE website. The CIN census covers early intervention, contacts and referrals to social care and the reasons, single assessments and identified factors, the nature and volume of child protection activity, the numbers of children protection conferences. The 903 covers children entering care and the reasons, the types of placement used, the legal status of children, how many children have left care and for what reasons (including adoption) and details about care leavers and their accommodation, employment and training outcomes and how the local authority is keeping in touch with them.
- 3.2 In addition, more detailed returns are submitted to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership board on children with an adoption plan, the timeliness of their matching and placing with an adopter and the recruitment of adopters. An annual social worker workforce survey is also submitted to the DfE about the workforce profile, recruitment, retention and sickness rates for social workers and also caseload numbers.
- 3.3 The Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) hosted by the DfE collates a range of data across a number of returns and can be filtered to compare and

benchmark performance across a range of children's indicators on a statistical neighbour, regional and national basis.

### **Local Reporting**

- 3.4 As has been recognised by Ofsted, we have a comprehensive and robust performance reporting framework which enables Halton to monitor and scrutinise our performance on a regular basis in line with the national reporting but also local performance measures. Each team has its own Performance and Intelligence Monitoring Management report (PIMM) which go into the service area in detail on either a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. There is a Performance Action report (PACT) on a monthly basis which summarises the key performance indicators for the month across the division and also a monthly ChAT (Childrens Service Analytical Tool) report. The ChAT uses the data that is required by Ofsted when they inspect and outlines performance areas Ofsted will examine when they inspect (and expect to be presented by Day 2 of any inspection) and helps us in our preparation for inspection. We also benchmark our performance regularly against our regional, national and statistical neighbours.

### **Halton's Childrens Social Care Performance**

#### **3.5 Contacts and Referrals**

Demand has risen over the last 3 years in particular from a rate of 374 per 10k to a rate of 514 in March 2019 and the early signs in the year to date is that demand continues to increase with the rate predicted to be 639 by year end. The level of demand is the third highest of our statistical neighbour group but is near the England average. The main reasons for referrals are domestic abuse and neglect, with support with behaviour the third main reason.

#### **Assessments**

The number of single assessments completed has risen, from 477 per 10k to a predicted rate of 715 by year end. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 3 December 2019, 1253 assessments were completed. Despite the significant increase in volume, 95% of assessments are completed in 45 working days which is significantly above the regional and national average. 61% of children are assessed as requiring ongoing social care support for a period of time. Factors identified at the end of assessments show that the following are present in assessments (and may be in more than one case): alcohol or drug use by parent, 11%; domestic abuse by parent or partner, 14%; mental health of parent, 11% and 22% of assessments had various patterns of neglect.

Re-referrals (where children are referred again within 12 months) are significantly lower than statistical and national averages at 7% compared to over 20%. This means that the assessment and support to children and families is highly effective at preventing need escalating.

#### **Children in Need (CIN)**

This is where children and families have been assessed as needing formal

support through a multi-agency plan, or where a child has a disability. Currently, there are 1044 children with an open episode of need (including those being currently assessed). The main reasons for CIN are abuse or neglect and family dysfunction. The majority of children have a CIN plan for less than a year (53%) and none for longer than 2 years. This means we work effectively with partners at improving the circumstances of the family in a timely way without drift, and where the risk to a child remain or increase, we take timely action to reduce and manage that risk. The rate of children per 10k with a CIN plan over the last 3 years has reduced from 420 in 17/18 to a current rate of 365 as we have improved our management and oversight of the CIN process.

### **Child Protection**

Section 47 enquiries are undertaken there is an actual or likely risk of significant harm. A decision to undertake a s47 enquiry, either as a single agency local authority or jointly with the police is made at a strategy discussion or meeting with the local authority, police and health services, with other agencies such as schools contributing to the decision and to decide if there is a need for immediate action to protect a child. Enquires are undertaken through an assessment and the number of s47 enquires have risen in the last 3 years from a rate of 179 per 10k in 17/19 to a current rate of 247. However, a s47 does not automatically lead to a child protection plan or a child coming into care; the assessment, which is done on a multi-agency basis examines the areas of concern and what can be done to reduce any risk, and what support is needed. It highlights the level of concern and mandates agencies to co-operate with the assessment. As a result, 70% of completed s47s this year have not led to a child protection conference.

The rate of child protections conferences per 10k has reduced overall in the last 3 years from a rate of 92 to a current rate of 73 (currently 139 children), which is in line with our statistical neighbours and only slightly above the England average. As we have been moving towards a systemic model of social work practice, where we work with the family and the family network in a different way to build resilience and support, and also develop an ethos of “safe uncertainty” – ie we cannot remove all risks, we can reduce and mitigate with the family and with our partners, it is anticipated this will continue to reduce.

### **Children in Care**

Halton currently has 264 children in care, a rate of 92 per 10k which has been stable for the last 3 years and not seen some the significant increases of other local authorities. The age profile of children in care is 14 under 1, 36 aged 0-4, 70, 5-9 and 145 11-18. The majority are on legal orders, with 8 accommodated by agreement with parents.

The majority (174) live in foster care (108 with in- house foster carers and 66 external foster carers), with 39 in residential placements. 2 young people are currently in welfare secure placements, 34 are living with parents and the remainder are living in supported accommodation. There are currently 5 placed for adoption.

The majority of children in care do not go missing; currently only 12% have had a missing episode but the majority again only go missing one of two episodes.

All placements have a robust approach to reporting young people missing and the service offers a return home interview which is taken up by young people 68% of the time and as a result we may make changes to their care plan where they are living and may change placement if the missing continues.

### **Care Leavers**

We now have extended legal duties to care leavers up until they are 25. We have a duty to keep in touch with them until they are 21, and offer an assessment and support if requested between 21 and 25. We are in touch with 96% of care leavers, and the majority are in suitable accommodation. 60% are in Education Employment or training but this dips significantly as they get older to around 40%. Care leavers tells is they struggle with accommodation, benefits and sanctions when trying to get a job and their mental health is affected and it is these areas that most ask for support with.

### **CONCLUSION**

This report provides a basic summary of the some of the key performance areas. Other areas not covered in this report are the workforce return, fostering service development and recruitment, early intervention and prevention (pre-social care) work and its impact, disabled children short break support and plans and the newly established safeguarding partnership and its work but this can be requested.

## **4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **4.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

Having a strong and robust framework for identifying and responding across all the levels of needs of children and families is key to ensuring that children and their families are safe and protected, and partners are clear about their responsibilities and role in working together with the local authority.

### **4.2 Employment, Learning and Skills**

None

### **4.3 A Healthy Halton**

Children whose health needs and level of development is potentially compromised are identified early and multi-agency support is in place to support them and their families.

### **4.4 A Safer Halton**

Children who are at risk of harm are identified quickly and services work together to minimise the risk of harm and take action to formally protect children in a timely way.

#### **4.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

#### **5.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

5.1 Supporting children and young people to live within their families and protecting them from harm is a legal and statutory duty for the local authority. The service manages well and by ensuring we continue to invest in our frontline social care and social work staff through training and support we maintain and develop the skills to meet this duty. The increase in demand at the front end is of concern (1086 current open cases) and how we ensure we recruit and retain the staff and capacity required to meet the needs.

#### **6.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

None identified.

#### **7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.