

11 July 2017		ITEM: 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Peer Review of Contacts, Referrals and Assessments		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Joseph Tynan – Service Manager Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, Children and Families Assessment Team and the Emergency Duty Team		
Accountable Head of Service: Sheila Murphy – Care and Targeted Outcomes (CATO)		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson – Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This covering report provides an overview of the recommendations and the subsequent actions following a Peer Review undertaken by Southend Borough Council. A copy of the action plan is attached to this report.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny consider the recommendations of the Review and the Action Plan, to drive up performance in these areas.

1.2 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny receive assurance that the Action Plan will deliver the required improvement.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Between the 9th and 11th May 2017, Southend Borough Council undertook a Peer Review which focussed primarily on contacts, referrals and assessments. This identified a number of recommendations.

2.2 In response to the recommendations made, the department has completed a detailed Action Plan. The Action Plan is attached to this report as Appendix 2.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The Peer Review focused on the 'front door' into Children's Social Care via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Children and Families Assessment

Team (CFAT) and the Prevention and Support Service (PASS). The key lines of enquiry were agreed prior to the review and were:

- Decision making and response
- Application of threshold
- Partner understanding of threshold
- Response to children who do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention

3.2 The Peer Review identified the following strengths within Thurrock's Children's Services:

- Practice within the MASH Service was seen to be an 'area of strength'.
- There was good evidence of multi-agency working in the MASH which resulted in 'timely safeguarding responses to children'.
- The MASH partners were found to have a clear understanding of the shared threshold and how this is applied.
- In the MASH, risk assessment of all contacts were found to be robust and an area of strength.
- When decisions were made to hold a strategy meeting, these were appropriate, indicating that the threshold for instigating the S47 process is well understood.
- Staff morale throughout the service was found to be good.
- Staff reported that they felt well supported through case discussions, formal and informal supervision.
- Practitioners reported that the recent changes to the structure of CFAT were positive.
- CFAT Practitioners identified that under-performance of colleagues within the service was appropriately challenged, in a drive to improve practice. They considered it positive that some under-performing agency staff had been asked to leave the department.
- It was identified that Practitioners and Managers had a good understanding of children's cases within their teams.
- The recent introduction of Prevention and Support Service (PASS) was seen as a positive step forward.
- The diverse skill set of PASS workers was considered a strength.
- PASS run regular workshops for community-based professionals (eg education) to improve the quality of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) referrals.
- Within PASS, good evidence was found of direct work with children, which was seen to alleviate delay in service delivery for families.

3.3 The recommendations are:

- Ensure that children's records reflect the reported strength in management oversight and supervision.
- Consider how the sense of the child and their lived experience, can consistently be evidenced on files.

- Be assured that the case management system (EHM) enables managers to rapidly identify drift.
- Review decision making when children move to Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC).
- Work with partners to improve both the understanding of threshold and the quality of contact, referrals and Common Assessment Framework.
- Review the effectiveness of the Lead Professional Role.
- Improve the quality of analysis in assessments in the Prevention and Support Service (PASS)

3.4 The Action Plan will be reviewed by the identified service leads and monitored by the Brighter Futures Programme Board every 8 weeks, which is chaired by the Corporate Director Children's Services.

3.5 Progress is already being made in the areas highlighted. It is also worthy of noting that the recommendations relating to CFAT have already been identified and are incorporated into the Improvement Plan for the service, thus work is already underway to achieve these improvements.

4. Consultation

N/A

5. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

The completed action plan will allow the council to meet and improve upon its core statutory functions in the delivery of services for children in need of early help and protection.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsay Marks**
Principal Solicitor, Children's Safeguarding

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

There are no implications arising from this report.

6.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

7. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Peer Review May 2017.

8. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Peer Review Action Plan- June 2017

Report Author:

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