

## MUNICIPAL YEAR 2018/2019 REPORT NO. 109

**MEETING TITLE AND DATE:**

Cabinet 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**REPORT OF: Tony Theodoulou**

Executive Director: People

**Agenda – Part: 1****Item: 8**

**Subject:** Children's Social Care Demand and Pressures

**Wards:** All

**Key Decision:** KD 4771

**Cabinet Member consulted:** Cllr Achilleas Georgiou

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### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children's Services is a key priority for the Council and Children's Social Care are on a trajectory of continuous improvement with strong, stable leadership in place. Services for looked after children, care leavers, fostering and adoption are good.

Following a recent focused visit on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018, Ofsted found that there had been considerable progress in many areas of practice, the changes to the SPOE and early help services have significantly improved the quality and timeliness of responses to most children in need. They specifically highlighted the Change and Challenge Service, Parent Support Service, Joint Service for Disabled Children and Child Sexual Exploitation Team as making a real difference to children and their parents.

The inspectors who carried out the focused visit identified weaknesses that were confined to one service area, the Referral and Assessment Service. They found that social work caseloads were too high, and the volume of work is unsustainable, impacting on the quality and timeliness of assessments and visits to some vulnerable children.

A full Ofsted inspection of Children's Social Care is expected within 6 months. In readiness for this, immediate action was taken to address the weak areas highlighted during the focused visit.

Cabinet are asked to approve:

- The action plan (Appendix 1) and temporary resources already in place funded through a one-off allocation of £600k from reserves in this financial year
- A further £1million on going investment in the Referral and Assessment service to be included as part of the medium term financial planning in the 2019/20 budget setting process.

This investment will enable recruitment to 18 frontline posts to address the demands and relieve pressure in Children's Social Care, increasing the social care workforce and reducing caseloads to an acceptable level in line with the Pan London agreement. It will help maintain Enfield's strong reputation and further improve it. Senior officers and the Cabinet Member will review the need for further investment once the current situation in the Referral and Assessment team is stabilised.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Cabinet to approve the action plan attached as an Appendix to this report.
- Allocate a one-off £600k from reserves this year and £1 million ongoing funding to invest in permanent increased capacity in the Referral and Assessment service to be included as part of the medium term financial planning in the 2019/20 budget setting process.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Following a recent focused visit (25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018) Ofsted found that there had been considerable progress in many areas of practice however several areas were identified that needed to improve. These were primarily confined to one service area, Referral and Assessment, highlighting high social work caseloads and inconsistent quality of assessments and plans, management oversight and quality assurance processes.
- 3.2 Ofsted recognised that senior leaders have continued to work extremely hard in challenging circumstances. Immediate action was taken following the focused visit to address the areas that required improvement and an action plan put into place.
- 3.3 The Single Point of Entry continues to process around 2000 contacts every month. In March 2017 a restructure was implemented which reduced capacity in other service areas to increase capacity in the SPOE to manage demand. Evidence from the recent Ofsted focused visit indicates that the SPOE is making good, consistent triage decisions in a timely manner, based on sound information.
- 3.4 The Referral and Assessment (R&A) team is responsible for assessing all children that meet the threshold for statutory services. In June 2018 new investment was secured to create extra capacity in this team. The recruitment processes are complete, and the permanent team starts operations on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018, releasing agency staff that were covering the posts.

Currently, as of 19<sup>th</sup> October 2018, caseloads for qualified social workers in the Referral and Assessment team are between 31-36. The demand continues to rise with new cases coming in for assessment reaching 90 per week. The new team starting on 1<sup>st</sup> November alleviates some pressure but not enough. Caseloads remain too high; the Pan London agreement recommends caseloads to be in the region of 15 – 21. This investment will increase the number of qualified social workers and reduce caseloads to an acceptable level in line with the Pan London agreement.

- 3.5 Enfield Children's Services spends less compared to most other local authorities, for example one neighbouring local authority invests £20 million more while a statistical neighbour invests almost double that of Enfield. Social workers in Enfield are over performing and this leads to fragility.
- 3.6 This paper requests allocation of £600k from reserves this year and seeks ongoing funding of one million pounds to permanently increase frontline staff in the Referral and Assessment team. This new investment will enable recruitment to 18 frontline posts to address the demands and relieve pressure in Children's Social Care, increasing the social care workforce and reducing caseloads to an acceptable level in line with the Pan London agreement. It will prevent delay in seeing children, strengthen consistency of assessments and quality assurance processes. It will help maintain Enfield's strong reputation and further improve it. Senior officers and the Cabinet Member will review the need for further investment once the current situation in the Referral and Assessment team is stabilised.
- 3.7 The Local Safeguarding Children Board will scrutinise the action plan and it will be monitored by the Cabinet member through monthly progress reports. The service will seek further independent benchmarking opportunities for example through peer reviews/mock inspection to benchmark performance and ensure continuous improvement. expenditure.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

There are a small number of social care agencies who provide additional capacity to local authorities who have demand issues. Some enquiries were made, but they were not cost effective.

#### **5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

A full inspection of Enfield Children's Social Care is expected in early 2019. Increasing frontline staffing in the Referral and Assessment team will firm up the strong foundations in social care and further hone our trajectory of continuous improvement. Ensuring that Enfield Council deliver high quality, safe services to children and families and meets regulatory expectations through additional investment in the service.

#### **6. COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS**

##### **6.1 Financial Implications**

For 2018/19, costs are estimated to be £600k which will need to be funded from the council's risk reserves on a one-off basis. It is not possible to fund this additional cost from within the departments existing resources because Children's Social Care are currently forecasting a £3.5m overspend which is reported in the Quarter 2 Revenue Monitoring report. However, the ongoing funding of £1m will need to be considered during the 2019/20 budget setting process.

## **6.2 Legal Implications**

- 6.2.1 The recommendations set out within this report are within the Council's powers and duties. The report recommends investment in Children's Social Services to strengthen delivery of the service and ensure that it can continue to support the Council in meeting its statutory obligations.
- 6.2.2 Every local authority has a general duty under Schedule 2 paragraph 4(1) of the Children Act 1989 to take reasonable steps through the provision of services under sections 17-30 of the Children Act 1989 to prevent children in their area suffering ill-treatment or neglect. The recommendations set out in this report comply with this legislation.
- 6.2.3 Under the Local Government Act 1972 the Council can appoint such officers as it thinks fit for the proper discharge of its functions. Section 111(1) of the Local Government Act permits a local authority to do anything calculated to facilitate the discharge of any of their functions. The recommendation to invest in Children's Services is in accordance with these powers.
- 6.2.3 Any recruitment and selection process must be carried out in accordance with the Council's policies, procedures and employment law, and avoid unlawful discrimination in advertising and recruiting to the posts.
- 6.2.4 An equality impact assessment of the impact of any reorganisation proposals should be prepared to enable decision-makers to consider compliance with the Council's duties generally under the Equality Act 2010, to avoid discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and access, including monitoring any possible negative impact hereafter.

## **6 KEY RISKS**

Without this investment the strong foundation and positive trajectory of improvement within Children's Social Care will weaken. Caseloads will remain high the Referral and Assessment team will not be able to meet demand and the quality of work will not improve. This would also affect staff morale, recruitment and retention, reversing the positive trend we have established in recent months.

## **7 IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES – CREATING A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITIES IN ENFIELD**

The work of Children's Social Care meets all 3 of the council's key priority areas within the corporate plan and the objectives within the Children and Young People's Plan. With emphasis and more weighting upon improving services to those children, young people and families that require prevention and intervention from safeguarding services across a broad spectrum from early help to statutory interventions. Through early intervention and specialist statutory services children are supported to live wherever possible within their families and communities.

## **8 EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

Children's Social Care forms part of the Councils programme of retrospective equalities impact assessments (EQIA). The retrospective EQIA collates equalities monitoring of service users, and consider how the service impacts on disadvantaged, vulnerable and protected characteristic groups in the community.

## **9 PERFORMANCE AND DATA IMPLICATIONS**

This proposal will enhance practice and performance which is monitored regularly through national statutory returns and at political, corporate, departmental, service and team levels.

## **10 HR IMPLICATIONS**

- Consultation to take place with trade unions in accordance with statutory regulations and Council guidelines.
- Upon approval, once it has been identified which frontline posts will be created and where they will sit in the structure, HR to be provided with up to date organisational charts to enable us to create the posts and provide post numbers for recruitment to commence without delay.
- Generic Social Worker and Advanced Social Work Practitioner posts will not require formal job evaluation.
- Any changes to job role profiles affected by the proposals to be submitted to HR for updating of records, or possible evaluation where the change is material.
- The Council's recruitment policy to be applied.

## **11 PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

Safeguarding children is a public health issue: preventing abuse and supporting vulnerable children and their families increases wellbeing. Children's Social Care protects and promotes the welfare of children and young people in Enfield and works in partnership with all health partners to improve outcomes in early life and childhood that leads to healthier, successful adults and improve the health of the population. For example: protecting children and young people results in improved population health outcomes by reducing mental health issues, sexually transmitted diseases and other issues e.g. obstetric complications in FGM victims.

## **Background Papers**

None

## Appendix 1

### Enfield Improvement Plan Following Ofsted Focused Visit on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

The cases of concern that Ofsted identified are linked to one service area, the Assessment Team, we have assured ourselves that this is not a systemic failing across services in Enfield the focused visit observed many strong areas of practice. Targeted action is being progressed.

We have a track record of making and sustaining improvements and recognised that the pace of change in the Assessment Team had to increase. There is increasing demand and high caseloads in the Assessment Team. The improvement plan below has been implemented to reduce caseloads, develop a more comprehensive understanding of the child's lived experience and setting clear expectations about the quality of practice for social workers and first line managers.

ENFIELD IMPROVEMENT PLAN				
	Action	Lead	By when	Impact
<b>Extending the remit of MASH and improving recording of rationale for decision making</b>	All strategy meetings will take place in the MASH on new referrals.	Executive Director & Director of Children and Family Services (DCFS)	Go live 5/11	Strengthening the involvement of all partner agencies in strategy discussions. MASH will hold responsibility for S47 decisions. <b>Update:</b> Recruitment in hand for increased staffing. MASH processes reviewed to include change in procedures. Operational partners informed. Go live week of 5/11.
	All MASH staff will link the application of the thresholds to the cause for concern for the child.	Head of Service (HoS) & MASH team manager	Immediate	More consistent identification of risk. Supporting all teams to have the child's needs central to the decision making. Improving practice standards ensuring the intervention improves the child's circumstances. <b>Update:</b> Action complete, a more robust audit and moderation process is in place from 1/11.
<b>Practice &amp; Standards</b>	Increase capacity in the assessment team and reduce caseloads.	Executive Director & Director Children and Family Services	Mid-October	Social Workers will have more time to focus on practice, tailored to the individual needs, rather than process. Increased management oversight

	<p>Deliver bespoke child focused and experiential workshops for all staff.</p> <p>Attach a practice leader to each team in the Assessment Team for a minimum period of 3 months.</p>	<p>Head of Practice Improvement (HPI) &amp; HoS</p> <p>Executive Director and Director Children and Family Services</p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>2- 3 weeks</p>	<p>capacity to further improve quality assurance of casework.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> 4 newly recruited experienced social workers starting mid- October, further staff starting 1/11, recruitment ongoing. Business case to Cabinet mid-November for further investment to increase capacity and reduce caseloads.</p> <p>Social Workers and team managers will develop further insight and understanding of the child/children's daily lived experience in that household and tailor their interventions to individual needs.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Programme of focused bite sized workshops in place.</p> <p>Develop and increase the confidence of current managers to quality assure all aspects of work as part of their everyday practice.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Recruitment to practice leaders completed all in post.</p>
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Fortnightly High-Risk Case Review Meeting with HOS &amp; Head of Practice Improvement (HPI)</p> <p>Refocus the audit tool to strengthen analysis and measure the impact of the intervention on the child's life.</p>	<p>HOS &amp; HPI</p> <p>Operational Management Group</p>	<p>1 week</p> <p>1 week</p>	<p>Building on the work that has started by the HoS to directly oversee high risk cases, there will be greater scrutiny and challenge of safety plans ensuring the child needs are at the heart of the work.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Fortnightly meetings in place, update on progress and impact overseen by November Practice and Performance Board.</p> <p>Developing a deeper understanding of the child's lived experience and setting clear expectations about the quality of practice.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> Audit tool reviewed and signed off at OMG away day on 18/10.</p>

	Embed CHaT (Children's Services Analysis Tool), regularly review Annex A and drive improvement through the monthly practice & performance board.	Executive Director and Director Children and Family Services	2 weeks	More accurate up to date data, greater understanding of trends informing improvement in practice. Easier identification of anomalies and our ability to take corrective action. <b>Update:</b> CHaT analysis of Annex A and any trends that arise from the report tabled for next Practice and Performance Board 25/10.
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Oversight and governance arrangements are in place, this improvement plan will be reviewed by the Executive Director: People and the Director of Children and Family Services, progress will be reported to the Executive Management Team. The Local Safeguarding Children Board has a role in scrutinising the plan and it will be monitored by the Cabinet member through monthly progress reports.