

## City Council Report for Resolution

**Report To:** Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee -  
7 September 2010

**Subject:** Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Young People in  
Manchester

**Report of:** Director of Children's Services

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### Summary

To update the committee following previous reports tabled during 2009 and in March 2010, on the progress to date in strengthening the local multi-agency arrangements to safeguard children.

To report on progress in performance against key performance indicators for Children's Social Care

To update on recent Ministerial announcements in relation to safeguarding and social work.

### Recommendations

The committee notes the contents of this report and progress to date.

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### Background documents (available for public inspection):

Report to Committee 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009  
Report to Committee 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009  
Report to Executive Committee 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009  
Report to Committee 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
Report to Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2010

## 1. Introduction

This report provides an up-date on progress in improving safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable children and young people. It builds on earlier reports to CYPOS (March, May November 2009, and March 2010). Regular reports on the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements will continue to be made available in accordance with the recommendations from the Report of Lord Laming (March 2009).

## **2. Safeguarding Activity**

As has been reported in both national and local media, since November 2008 and the publicity surrounding the 'Baby Peter' case in Haringey, across the country there have been significant increases in referrals to Children's Social Care; children becoming subject to child protection plans and children coming into the 'Looked After' system and being made subject to legal proceedings. This increased demand reflects the extent and complexity of need in the city and continues to place pressure on specialist services, particularly on District social work teams, child protection case conference and looked after children reviewing services and on family placement and residential services. The services are working very hard to keep pace with the demand to ensure children are effectively safeguarded.

Manchester has seen an increase of over 1000 contacts a month to Children's Social Care between 2008/09 to 2009/10. However, the financial investment made into the development of the First Response Team and District social work establishments has enabled this increased demand to be more effectively managed. Completion of initial assessments each month has improved from 529 in April 2010 to 627 in June 2010. Completion of core assessments has continued to improve from 172 in April 2010 to 294 in June 2010. The timeliness of completion of assessments has also improved, at the end of July 2010; initial assessments completed within 7 days are at 80.5% representing a 15.5% increase on the year end result for 2009/10. Core assessments completed within 35 days are at 76.6% representing a 21.3% on the year end result of 2009/10. Social work Team Managers continue to monitor the quality of assessments to ensure compliance with National Assessment Framework standards, e.g. they are child centred, contain a family history and have multi agency contributions.

The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plans has increased from 591 at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 to 668 by June 2010. Despite this very significant increase, performance on child protection reviews taking place in required timescales remains at 100% but the timeliness of initial child protection case conferences being held within 15 days of the strategy discussion remains challenging, action is being taken to improve performance with June performance at 64.8% representing a 50% increase on the year end result of 2009/10.

The numbers of Care Proceedings being instigated increased by 63% between 2008/9 and 2009/10. Numbers of looked after children, whilst relatively high remain stable reflecting more effective planning, particularly in relation to cases of neglect.

Within the context of increasing need and demand all children who are subject to a child protection plan or who are looked after have an allocated social worker. A number of cases where a child has been assessed as in need of support have not

been allocated a social worker; this number has decreased from 38 in April to 22 in July 2010. All have been robustly reviewed, risk assessed and prioritised. The service strives to ensure all children in need have a suitably qualified worker and progress will be regularly monitored and reported.

### **3. Early Intervention and Prevention - Common Assessment Framework (CAF)**

Paragraph 2 (above) exemplifies that the need through CAF for early intervention and prevention is great. Overall there has been an increase in the number of children and young people supported by a CAF, from 653 in 08/09 to 745 in 09/10. Whilst this represents a shortfall of 315 against the target set for 09/10 the variety of agencies completing a CAF continues to increase. Schools remain the key agency for completion of a common assessment with 285 completed by schools in 09/10 followed by Health with 123 completed. There has been a particular increase in the numbers triggered by poor attendance, reflecting the city wide focus on improving school attendance. Implementation and increasing the numbers of CAF remains a key priority for the District Wide Leadership Teams (DWLT'S) who have responded to the finding from the Unannounced Inspection which reported that too few children in Manchester are supported by CAF. They are monitoring progress and ensuring barriers to completion of a CAF are removed. Good progress has been made and challenging targets will continue to be set for each District.

Multi agency training has been supporting the culture change which underpins integrated working providing a consistent message about the role and responsibility of the Lead Professional and CAF process. The programme has been revised and improved in line with practitioner feedback. Attendance and demand has been high, and feedback on the quality of the training has been consistently positive.

A formal Impact Evaluation was undertaken and concluded that CAF is improving individual outcomes for children, young people, parents and carers in Manchester and that the process works well. This is supported by the views of most young people, parents, carers and practitioners who participated in the evaluation. The central CAF project closed on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2010 as planned to support the mainstreaming of CAF with the future accountability and governance transferring to District Wider Leadership Teams through to the Children's Trust Executive.

One area to highlight where there has been an increase in arrangements is those children subject to private fostering arrangements. These children can be particularly vulnerable and concerted efforts have been undertaken to increase the awareness and notification to the Local Authority. In June 2010 there were 44 children subject to private fostering arrangements, this represents an increase of 10 compared to June 2009 and is the highest number reported in the City.

### **4. Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)**

Quarterly reports in relation to the key performance indicators are presented to MSCB. The information from these, together with the information from Serious Case Reviews has led to MSCB commissioning a piece of research to consider the needs of victims of Domestic Abuse, and services available to meet those needs. This will then inform future commissioning of services to this vulnerable group. In addition

MSCB partner agencies are contributing to the Drug and Alcohol Service redesign, with the focus being on Early Intervention and Prevention, and focussing on safeguarding children within the context of the family and community in which they live.

Nationally, there have been several high profile Serious Case Reviews reported, all have identified themes of poor risk assessments, practice not always being child centred and the impact of drugs and alcohol on parenting. These themes are consistent with the learning from recent Serious Case Reviews in Manchester. In applying the learning, all findings of SCR's are fed into workforce development plans and training courses. The MSCB commissioned an Independent consultant to undertake a thematic analysis of recent SCR's held in Manchester which has been shared with multi agency partners. Briefings to front line managers and social workers are also undertaken and feed into Team and District business plans.

## **5. Ministerial Announcements**

In early June the Department for Education released a Written Ministerial Statement setting out its intentions to commission Professor Eileen Munro to conduct an independent review to improve child protection. There will be a number of key focus areas for the review including early intervention, trusting professionals, removing bureaucracy and greater transparency and accountability. In the statement the Department confirmed its commitment to implementing the 15 recommendations of the social work task force. Professor Munro's first report will be released in September 2010. It is expected that this review will make specific recommendations as to the future of the Integrated Children's System and strengthening the Serious Case Reviews process now that those commissioned from June 2010 will need to be published in full.

The Secretary of State has also signalled his intention to:

- Remove the duty on schools to co-operate through Children's Trusts via the forthcoming Education Bill
- Remove the requirements on local authorities to set up Children's Trust Boards and the requirements of these Boards to prepare and publish a joint Children and Young People's Plan, at the first available legislative opportunity.
- Revoke the regulations underpinning the Children and Young People's Plan and withdraw the statutory guidance on Children's Trusts, in the autumn.

The Education Select Committee has launched an inquiry into the role and performance of Ofsted. The inquiry will look at whether inspection of all organisations, settings and services to support children's learning and welfare is best conducted by a single inspectorate.

## **6. Inspection and Improvement**

The next annual Unannounced Inspection is due by the end of November 2010. A working group is in place to ensure all staff understand the inspection process and their contribution to a successful inspection. Eight areas for development were identified following the last Unannounced Inspection in November 2009. An action

plan is in place and progress is being made against all key areas. (A separate report provides the detail of this can be made available to CYPOS members upon request). Investment in District social work posts has reduced the number of social work vacancies. A recent recruitment campaign was favourably received with over 46 applications for seven vacant posts. Work to address caseloads has begun and a caseload monitoring tool is being piloted in three of the Districts.

Newly qualified social workers (NQSW's) continue to be supported through a bespoke workforce planning and development programme. Caseloads for NQSW's are high which remains a challenge, these cases are often complex and this inevitably reflects the level of need of the families who require statutory social work support and intervention.

Improving the quality of initial and core assessments by social workers has been a key area for development. Mandatory training for staff on the National Assessment Framework was commissioned which incorporated key findings from Serious Case Reviews. A risk assessment tool has been approved and risk workshops have been arranged to improve risk analysis and risk management.

The Health Checklist identified by the Social Work Task Force will be tested in the Districts and will focus upon caseloads, supervision and support requirements. This will test out compliance with agreed standards and progress to ensure that appropriate action is taken to manage them effectively. Wythenshawe District will undergo the first checklist in September 2010 followed closely by the other Districts.

At the time of the last report to Committee, the Announced Ofsted Inspection was anticipated. This is still awaited. Ofsted will lead this inspection in partnership with the Care Quality Commission who are responsible for ensuring the quality of Health service delivery. Ofsted and the Quality Care Commission will give up to two weeks notice prior to undertaking an inspection of the City's Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services. Whilst child protection, corporate parenting and safeguarding arrangements are constantly being reviewed and improved some specific preparations continue to ensure we are well organised for the announced inspection.

An Evidence Base has been compiled that conforms to Ofsted requirements and is kept updated as new information becomes available. Preparation is ongoing for the announced inspection and a detailed project plan has been developed by a multi agency programme team lead by Children's Services. The plan identifies all key tasks that need completing prior to, and during the inspection, and identifies the individuals responsible for particular tasks. A small team has been identified within the Business Improvement and Commissioning Division to provide support to Children, Young People and Families Division prior to and during the inspection. A Power Point presentation briefing note has been developed and presented to MSCB, Children's Trust Board, and Children's Services staff.

A self assessment against the Ofsted grade descriptors has concluded a likely score of adequate against the staying safe outcome. Whilst improvements have been made there continues to remain risks in relation to high numbers of looked after children with over 40% placed outside of Manchester, the levels of need, demand and complexity of cases, the consistency and reliability of social work practice.

## **7. Staffing - Recruitment and Retention.**

All districts retain consistent baseline staffing levels which enables each service to develop more effective, efficient approaches to service delivery based on need. There are currently seven social work (SW) vacancies city wide from a district establishment of 141, all are covered by agency staff. There are no Advanced Practitioner vacancies and the 1.5 Team Manager vacancies are covered by agency staff.

Social work retention continues to be a priority. A retention group has been established to ensure continuing participation in the NQSW Programme. There will be a stand at the Soc Now Careers Convention in November to attract social workers to apply for posts within Children's Services particularly experienced social workers.

All social workers, Team Managers and Advanced Practitioners have been issued with a Continuing Professional Development Folder which highlights the importance of induction, the need for continuous development linked to the core competencies required for the role and to business goals. This links to key areas for development highlighted in the recent Ofsted Social Work survey, findings from Serious Case Reviews and individual areas for development identified in ongoing supervision and appraisal.

A newly developed Social Work Practice Handbook has been issued to all social work staff and managers which gives clear practice guidance on social work processes which have to be followed in the arena of safeguarding/child protection from initial assessments through to permanence. A joint Social Work Development Group is in place with Adult Social Care. This Group will link into the work of the Social Work Taskforce and look at how social work developments will link into and inform corporate priorities. There is also joint work with Adults across safeguarding training - child protection/ vulnerable adults linked into the Think Family approach. This has led to the development of joint training courses particularly around domestic abuse and mental health.

Licences for Community Care Inform, an electronic online tool which gives Social Workers access to research and evidence based practice in all areas of Social Work including safeguarding, have been purchased which enables practitioners access to the most up to research and policy guidance.

A recent event in June was held for Team Managers and Advanced Practitioners which focused on raising standards in front line practice and was very positively received. Previous events have focused on Learning from Serious Case Reviews and Inspection requirements.

Management support for Deputy District managers is available in the form of a Post Graduate course tailored to Children's Services. An Institute of Leadership & Management Level 5 has been commissioned with 2 of the cohorts exclusively for social work Team Managers. These, together with a management induction course, and a range of courses on management practices - e.g. appraisal, grievance and

discipline, are designed to link with the new Leadership and Management Strategy and Manager's contract and to raise standards of social work management practice.

Recent feedback from the Investors in People Internal Review of Children, Young People and Families identified a number of areas of improvement against standards but highlighted inconsistency of practice in relation to induction, appraisal, and supervision. An action plan has been developed which will feed into the workforce development plan.

## **8 Integrated Children's System (ICS)**

Whilst ICS will be reviewed as part of the Munroe Review of Child Protection mentioned previously, the system in Manchester was successfully up graded, and simplified forms along with the Child in Need Coordinator's workflow processes were implemented on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

Over 200 staff were trained on the new upgrade and feedback from social workers and managers about the changes has been very positive. As use of the documents become embedded social workers will be freed up to spend more time with children and families. The next priority is the introduction of simplified Child Protection forms and workflow to further enhance the service provided to children by Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Workers.

## **9. Conclusion**

As can be seen, similar to local authority areas across the country, Manchester has seen significant increase in demand on specialist statutory social work services. However, improvements in performance in some key areas can be highlighted such as timeliness and quality of assessments and the recruitment of staff. The increase in demand and the high number of children subject to child protection plans or who are looked after alongside the relative inexperience of the social work force continue to present a challenge in providing consistency and reliability across the city. This is closely monitored by senior management and reporting on performance is undertaken on a monthly basis to ensure multi agency safeguarding arrangements are secured.