

Update on the Safeguarding Improvement Programme

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Purpose

1. The Health and Wellbeing Standing Committee received an update on the safeguarding and looked after children improvement programme in November 2010.
2. This report provides Members with a further update on developments in the Children's Social Care service, key performance indicators and an overview of the referral process.

Information

3. Following consultation with staff groups a new vision and mission for children's social care has been drafted (copy provided as background paper). This overarching statement of policy will be used as a reference point as the service moves forward, to retain the focus of our work with children, young people and families and communicate our purpose clearly with our partners.

The purpose of Children's Social Care is to give the most vulnerable children in Nottinghamshire the support and protection they need to be safe, secure, happy and to achieve their full potential. This is based on the principles that:

- We work to protect the most vulnerable children in society
- We will keep children at home in their families wherever possible
- Children should exit the care system by returning to their family or into alternative permanent placements (such as adoption) as quickly as possible

Progress to date

4. In January 2011 data for the quantitative targets within the improvement notice showed:
 - 71.7% of initial assessments being completed within 10 working days, against a target of 70%

- 67.7% of core assessments being completed within 35 working days, against a target of 70%

Graphs showing the trend in completion rates for Initial and Core Assessments are attached as appendix B.

In December 2010, 559 referrals were made to children's social care, which was a reduction for the fourth consecutive month. The number of re-referrals started in December 2010 (189) was also the lowest number throughout the whole year.

There has been an expected seasonal rise in referrals and re-referrals (589 referrals and 222 re-referrals) in January 2011. However, the generally reduced numbers of both referrals and re-referrals reflect the impact of the pathways to provision initiative and a better understanding with our partners of the thresholds for social care support.

The turnover of staff in children's social care was 12.66% in the 12 month period to 30 November 2010, against a target of 10% by the end of June 2011. However, the vacancy rate for social work staff remains at 0%. Full capacity is maintained through the deployment of agency staff to cover vacancies and provide additional safeguarding capacity. There is currently a recruitment programme taking place that is reducing the numbers of agency staff and replacing them with directly employed staff across a number of social work disciplines.

There continues to be a downward trend in sickness absence from 22 days per full time employee (fte) at outset of the Safeguarding Improvement Programme, to 16.88 days per fte in the 12 months to 30 November 2010.

Referral Process

5. The flow chart attached as appendix A shows the basic referral process and the numbers/percentages involved at key points in the process.

Next Steps

6. A transformation programme for Children's Social Care is being developed to change the way the service operates to manage future demand to secure better outcomes for families whilst being financially sustainable and robust.
7. To sustain the improvements achieved to date as confirmed by the positive initial feedback from the unannounced OFSTED inspection of the Council's contact, referral and assessment arrangements which took place 8th-10th February. Though only preliminary at this stage, the feedback from the inspection is positive with an

acknowledgement of the tremendous efforts made across our partnership to improve our arrangements for keeping children and young people safe. The inspection team conducted a thorough analysis of our improvement programme and examined a wide range of evidence. The team is satisfied that we have made significant improvement and we are confident the subsequent letter from Ofsted will recognise that. Equally, where the letter refers to areas for development, these will be consistent with our own assessment of progress and with the wider improvement programme. The final letter from Ofsted will be published on 9 March 2011

Recommendation

8. It is recommended that the Health & Wellbeing committee:
- i. consider and ask questions about the information provided
 - ii. consider further progress in due course

Steve Edwards

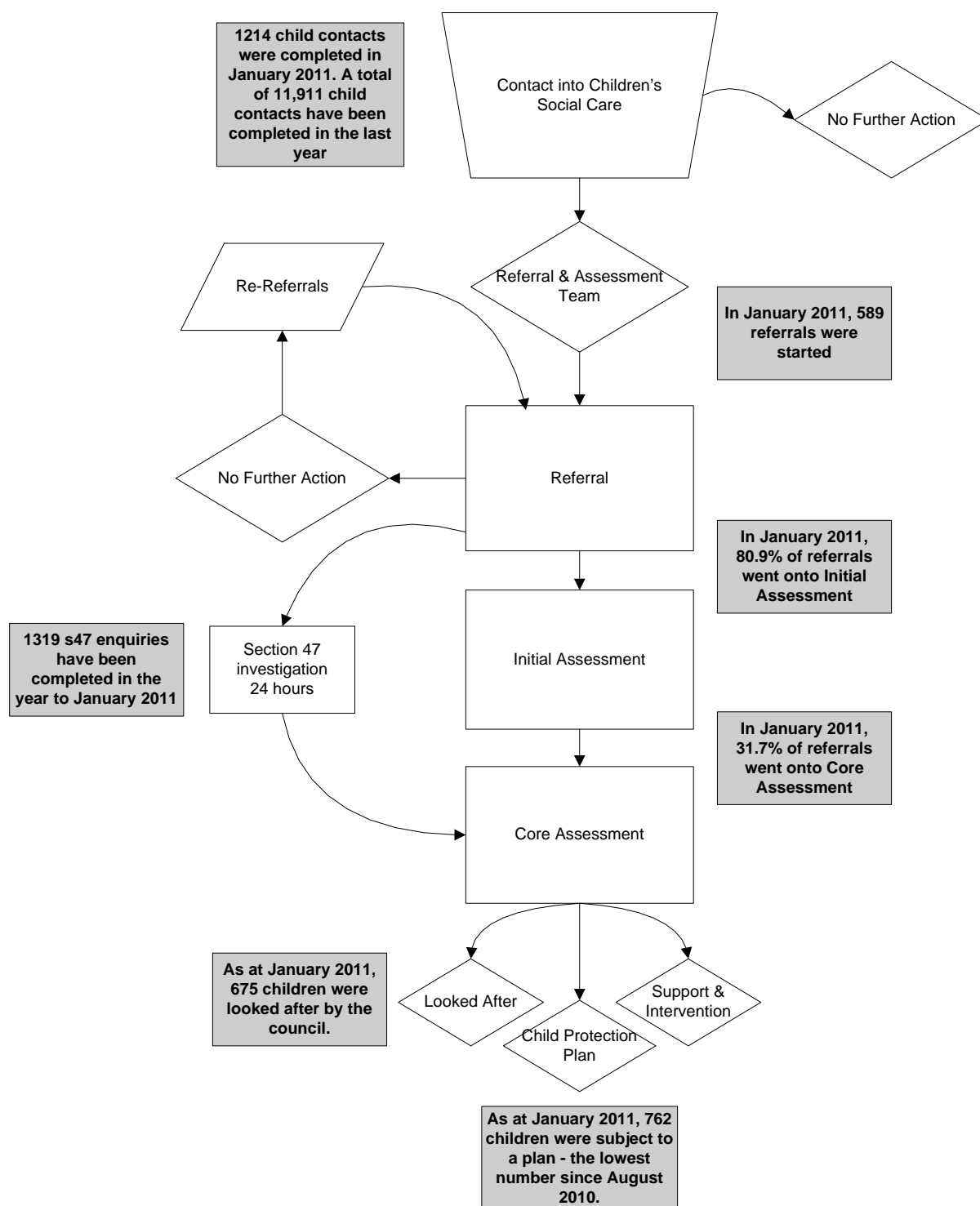
**Acting Service Director, Children's Social Care
Children, Families and Cultural Services Department**

Lead Scrutiny Officer: matthew.garrard@nottsgov.uk

Background papers:

Update on the Safeguarding Improvement Programme November 2010
Children's Social Care Policy statement

Appendix A – The referral process



Appendix B – Completion rates for Initial & Core Assessments

