

## Purpose

### Update on the Safeguarding Improvement Programme

1. The Social Care and Health committee received an update on the safeguarding and looked after children improvement programme in July 2011.
2. This report provides Members with a further update on developments in the Children's Social Care service.

## Information

3. **Performance** - The timeliness of Initial Assessments is greatly improved, 81% being completed in time in July 2011 compared with 37% in April 2010. It is also positive to note that the performance on the timeliness of Core Assessments has risen from 61.8% within timescales in July 2010 to 76% in July 2011.
4. **Quality** - The findings of a recent external audit indicate that Initial Assessment (IA) practice is improving in several key areas. The number of IAs containing clear management sign off has increased sharply, all the IAs audited were clearly focused on the issue in hand and improvement concerning children being seen and spoken to was noted. 75% of IAs audited were either good or adequate quality, compared with 55% in the same audit last year.
5. The external audit of Core Assessments (CA) has confirmed that a focus on greater quality is required and identified that clearer recording of multi-agency involvement is required in CAs.

6. **Demand** - The service continues to be under a high level of demand from the number of contacts received, referrals undertaken, and the number of looked after children and those subject to child protection plans in the system.
7. 4. In 2011, an average of 1370 contacts has been received by the service each month, peaking at 1570 in June. The number of children subject to a child protection plan has been increasing since February 2011, after a period of gradual reduction. Although the number of children becoming subject to a plan reduced slightly in June 2011, the figure still exceeds the number of plans being discontinued. The net effect is that 874 children were subject to a child protection plan in July 2011, the highest number in the last 12 months. Similarly, the number of looked after children in July 2011 (739) is the highest figure in the last 12 months, a 12% increase compared to August 2010.
8. **Workforce** - As at 11 August there were 15 social worker vacancies being covered by agency staff. The high number of social worker vacancies is a consequence of the additional 26 permanent social worker posts which were established in March 2011. In addition to vacancy cover agency staff are also being used to cover 10 sickness absences, 5 staff on maternity leave and 2 suspensions.
9. We continue to advertise social workers and team manager posts as part of the plan to reduce our reliance on agency staff whilst operating a safe service. The investment in permanent staff also ensures that progress in reducing social workers workloads is sustained and it is expected that the next workload management figures will reflect this sustained improvement. These will be available at the end of September 2011.

10. The new permanence team comprising 2 Team Managers and 9.5 Social Workers has been recruited to and will begin work in September 2011. Initially this team will focus on ensuring permanency for children and improving adoption timescales. The recruitment and inception of the permanency team should alleviate a lot of the pressure currently being experienced within Children's Services Teams.
11. **Re-inspection of safeguarding services** – Notification was received on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September, that Ofsted will conduct a follow up inspection of safeguarding services in Nottinghamshire. The full inspection carried out in March 2010 found safeguarding services to be inadequate and as a consequence, the Department for Education served an Improvement Notice on the council in June 2010.
12. The Ofsted team will be on-site to conduct the fieldwork element of the inspection in the week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> September, with the final report being produced on 12<sup>th</sup> October. We are confident that the improvements delivered through the Safeguarding Improvement Programme put us in a good position to secure a positive inspection outcome.

## **Recommendations**

13. It is recommended that the Overview Committee consider and comment on the information provided.

## **Chief Officer**

### **STEVE EDWARDS**

Service Director, Children's Social Care

Scrutiny Co-ordinator: martin.gately@nottscc.gov.uk

Background papers: Ofsted Inspection Story Board for staff and partners