# Item 5a

**Children's Social Care Performance Report – February 2024**

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Data and intelligence around practice outcomes are key in driving continuous practice improvement.

1.2 The purpose of this report, along with Item 5b (attached), is to provide members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with an overview of performance in Children's Social Care for February 2024. It should be noted that, at this time, reporting continues to develop following the move to the Mosaic case management system. The data in this report is consistent with the information provided to the Children's Development Board and the Director's Performance Clinics.

## 2.0 Background

2.1 Following the migration of the Children's Social Care case management system to Mosaic in November 2022, work continues with Business Intelligence to redevelop reporting across the service. Although further development is required to the Performance Framework, the data it produces is now routinely used to produce monthly updates to the Children's Development Board and is used as the basis of the monthly Director's Performance Clinics.

2.2 In September 2023 Ofsted carried out an inspection of Barnsley local authority children's services (ILACS), which judged the overall effectiveness of Children's Services to be 'Good'. As part of the inspection, Ofsted identified that the ability to gather and analyse data through the electronic recording system was an area for development, while also recognising the progress and improvements that have been made.

## 3.0 Current Position

3.1 Reporting continues to progress, with two new operational reports having recently been made available to service: the Strategy, S47 and Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) operational report and the Fostering operational report. A third operational Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report is due to be signed off imminently.

3.2 Whilst development continues, Heads of Service and Service Managers maintain management oversight and assurance using a combination of highlight reports provided by Team Managers, and operational reports which report on information from Mosaic, which are reviewed and discussed in conjunction with the case management report at fortnightly Head of Service performance clinics.

3.3 We continue to work on data quality, alerting managers of any issues, using various methods to target those individuals who need support and challenge.

Demand

3.4 At the Front Door, the number of contacts at the end of February was 674, increasing by 12 between January and February. There were also an additional 732 'Information Only Contacts' in February, increasing from 654 in January, which deal with requests for information from partners.

3.5 The number of referrals is generally proportional to the number of contacts received. At the end of February, the number of referrals was 297, lower than the number in January (304).

Demand - Front Door
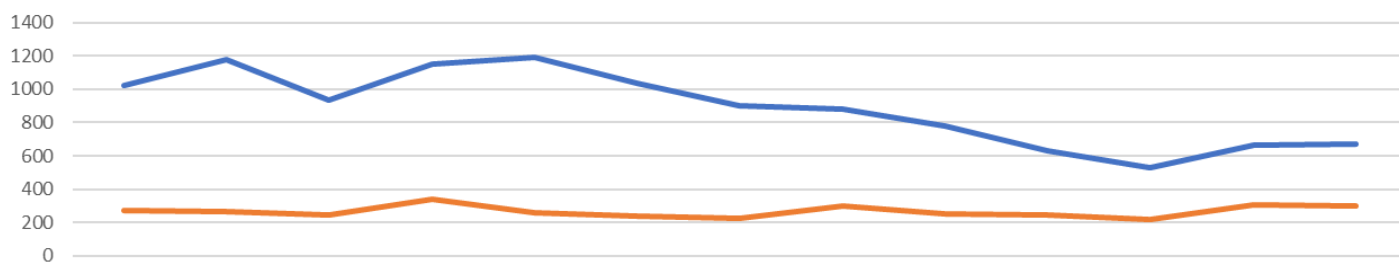
| | Feb-23 | Mar-23 | Apr-23 | May-23 | Jun-23 | Jul-23 | Aug-23 | Sep-23 | Oct-23 | Nov-23 | Dec-23 | Jan-24 | Feb-24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Contacts* | 1020 | 1181 | 937 | 1152 | 1191 | 1037 | 904 | 882 | 781 | 631 | 531 | 662 | 674 |
| Referrals | 271 | 268 | 243 | 336 | 257 | 240 | 221 | 301 | 251 | 244 | 215 | 304 | 297 |

* Excludes information only contacts

3.6 The number of Children open to the Service remains broadly static with numbers increasing from 1704 in January to 1726 in February.

3.7 The number of Children in Care at the end of February was 403 remaining the same as January. The numbers of children in care have declined since the peak of 421 in October 2023 and have remained stable over the last three months.

3.8 The number of Care Leavers open to service was 124 at the end of February ████████████████ ████████████████. At the same point last year, there were 100 care leavers open to service.

3.9 There were 21 children admitted into care during February. Since April 2023 this figure has fluctuated between 15 and 25.

Performance and Compliance

3.10 The percentage of decisions made on all contacts and referrals in one working day at the end of February was 81%, this is decline on the previous month (85%) but remains above the target of 80%. The percentage outcome in 2 working days increases to 96% and in 3 working days to 99%.

3.11 The percentage of re-referrals within 12 months of a referral was 25.6% at the end of February, against a target of 20%, this is above the national average of 21.5%. The year-to-date figure is 24.4%. Dip Sampling is ongoing in all service areas to ensure there is an understanding of context and learning from this.

3.12 There were 362 assessments undertaken across Children's Social Care in February. 85.4% of assessments were carried out in 45 working days which continues to exceed the target of 80%. In terms of benchmarking, the October figure exceeds the statistical neighbour benchmark (78.6%) as well as the regional (82%) and National (84.5%) figures. In the Assessment Service, assessments authorised in 45 working days continues to be robust, in February performance was 96.4%.

3.13 Assessments completed in 20 working days continues to rise. In February 29.5% of assessments were carried out in 20 working days compared with 25.8% in January.

3.14 The percentage of S47 investigations leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) decreased to 28.3% in February from 42.9% in January. The percentage of children whose ICPC was held within 15 working days was 78%, decreasing from 90% in January and has dipped below the target of 80%.

3.15 Of the 49 children starting a Child Protection Plan in February, ████ of them had a plan within the last 2 years, which equates to █ children. Any children subject to a second or subsequent plan within 2 years are reviewed to understand the circumstances leading to the repeat plan.

3.16 The timescales for plans being completed, and how this is reported on are currently being revised. Based on the current reporting rules, compliance for up-to-date plans in February shows a varied picture.

3.17   Performance for care leavers with an up-to-date plan has declined since the previous month but remains above the target of 80%. Performance is still below our 80% target for children in need, children on a child protection plan and children in care.

| Up to Date Plan | January 2024 | February 2024 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Children in Need | 72% | 72% |
| Children on a CPP | 66% | 68% |
| Children Looked After | 65% | 67% |
| Care Leavers | 89% | 85% |

3.18   The percentage of children visited in timescales show that visits for children on a child protection plan, children in care and care leavers have all improved since January with a decline in the timeliness of visits for children in need.

3.19   Performance for children in need, children in care and care leavers exceed the target of 80%. However, visits for children on a child protection plan are below the 95% target.

3.20   Mosaic has now been configured to allow us to reflect the longer visiting periods within our practice standards and this is beginning to be developed into reporting. Team managers track visits to children and discuss this in supervision to ensure children are being seen and managers are assured that the majority of children are visited in line with statutory requirements.

| Visits | January 2024 | February 2024 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Children in Need within last 4 weeks | 89% | 81% |
| Children on a CPP visited within 10 days | 83% | 84% |
| Children Looked After | 87% | 90% |
| Care Leavers within the last 8 weeks | 84% | 90% |

3.21   Case Supervisions have remained the same or declined across the service in February, with supervisions for children on a CP plan exceeding the 80% target.

| Case Supervisions | January 2024 | February 2024 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Children in Need | 91% | 74% |
| Children on a CPP | 92% | 92% |
| Children Looked After | 83% | 65% |
| Care Leavers | 83% | 77% |

3.22   For children in care, there were 28 missing episodes in February, involving 12 children. Since April 2023, the number of missing episodes each month ranges from 11 to 28.

3.23   The percentage of children in care with an up to date and Quality Assured Personal Education Plan (PEP) was 100% at the end of February.

3.24   School attendance for children in care is measured cumulatively from the start of the academic year. The data in this report is from the end of Q3.   At this point, Primary school attendance for children in care was 94.9%, lower than the Q2 figure of 96.6% and slightly below the target of 95%. However, primary attendance continues to be above those young people who are not in care. The reduction in performance has been attributed to an increased cohort, placement instability and additional needs of young people. The primary virtual school advocate and an education welfare officer continue to provide additional support to schools and social workers which is reviewed weekly.

3.25   Secondary school attendance was 88.0% at the end of Q3, decreasing from 90.7% at the end of Q2, and is below the target of 92.5%. At this point attendance was affected by a number of factors. There were

two young people awaiting school through the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC) process, young people new to care, placement instability and several young people not having appropriate provision due to Special Education Needs and/or Disability (SEND) processes outside the control of the Virtual School. These young people have weekly oversight and plans of support and intervention are in place.

3.26 At the end of Q3, the percentage of primary school suspensions for children in care was 2.65%, increasing from 0.94% at the end of Q2, but remains lower than the target of 3.04% and is rag rated green. Close working in school via Advocates, Learning Engagement Mentor and Virtual School Head observations have allowed for greater understanding of the issues associated with the suspensions.

3.27 At the end of Q3, the percentage of secondary school suspensions for children in care was 13.99%, increasing from 6.52% at the end of Q2, but remains lower than the target of 16.18% and is rag rated green. Again, close working in school via Advocates, Learning Engagement Mentor and Virtual School Head observations have allowed for greater understanding of the issues associated with the suspensions and allows support to be put in place for children.

3.28 The latest education, employment and training data available for care leavers was at the end of quarter 3, at which point 52.6% of care leavers aged 19-21 were engaged in education, employment or training. This was a reduction from Q2 where the figure was 59.4% and remains below the target of 68%. Performance is covered in the monthly ETE panel meetings. And over recent weeks colleagues from the TIAG (Targeted Information, Advice and Guidance) and Future Directions teams have re-commenced their regular meetings to provide greater scrutiny of the cohort.

3.29 There were █ children that left care to adoption in February with a total of 22 children leaving care to adoption since April 2023.

**4.0 Future Plans & Challenges**

4.1 We are seeing improvements in performance. However, many areas remain below target. There are several systems and structures in place to monitor and challenge performance, which include:

- Monthly Directors' performance clinics.
- Fortnightly Head of Service (HOS) performance clinics with Service Managers, Team Managers, colleagues from the Quality Assurance Team and Business Intelligence.
- Service improvement plans that focus on practice improvement.
- A continued focus on data quality and timeliness of recording in Mosaic.
- Continued work with key link officers in the Quality Assurance Team, who provide support around key themes and areas of improvement. This includes training for auditors.
- Targeted performance plans put in place by HOS to ensure a more focused approach is taken to support weaker performance.
- Continuing to raise expectations around timely recording now that we are confident that the operating environment will allow us to set ambitious standards and targets.
- The use of weekly exception reports by team managers in CYPT.
- Performance management to be more embedded within teams taking the learning and systems from those high performing teams to support consistency.
- Compliance checks by CP / IRO's that result in escalation to the appropriate Team Manager and Service Manager.

4.2 Children's Social Care and Business Intelligence will continue to work together on our agreed data and reporting priorities. The first meetings of the new Operational Report Task and Finish Group have taken place and are working well. Agreed scoping documents provide clear vision of what is required with development commencing on the new scopes in March 2024.

4.3 The Operational dashboard will provide a central data, performance and intelligence resource for Children's Social Care and aims to ensure that everyone has access to the key performance and case level information they need to manage their work, performance and improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

4.4    Work has commenced on exploring alternative options for consolidating data and information in relation to Targeted Early Help Services, but there is still much to do. The caseloads and contacts reports are at the sign off stage (end of March 2024), with further reporting priorities to be defined and agreed in line with the revised practice standards and service improvement plan for Targeted Early Help.

**5.0    Invited Witnesses**

5.1    The following witnesses have been invited to answer questions from the committee:-

- Matthew Boud, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, Barnsley Council
- Carly Speechley, Executive Director Children's Services, Barnsley Council
- Cllr Trevor Cave, Cabinet Spokesperson, Children's Services, Barnsley Council

**6.0    Possible Areas for Investigation**

6.1    Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:

- How do you plan to improve the quality of referrals to Children's Social Care from partners?

- What have you learned from those cases where children and young people have been re-referred within 12 months of a previous referral, and how will this change practice?

- How do you know whether the step-up and step-down thresholds are set appropriately and what support is available for families and children/young people on the edge of care?

- Why has performance against child protection conference timescales fallen and what can be done about it?

- What is preventing you from achieving the timescales for plans being completed, and how this is reported on? What changes need to be made to address this?

- What are the risks associated with not visiting children with a child protection plan within the statutory timescale of 10 days and for those who are not hitting the target, what is the longest that a child has had to wait for a visit?

- What more needs to be done to support care leavers into employment, education or training?

- How confident are you that processes and procedures are effective in keeping children in Barnsley safe? How do you know?

- How confident are you that data is accurate and timely, and providing the information you need to make effective decisions?  Where are the gaps, what more needs to be done?

- What more needs to be done to streamline processes so that social workers have the time to be professionally curious, and offer timely and quality support?

- What can elected members do to support the work?

**7.0    Background Papers and Useful Links**

- Item 5b (attached) – Monthly Performance Update – Data for February 2024 REDACTED
- Item 5c (attached) – Understanding Children's Social Care Performance REDACTED

**8.0     Glossary**

CIN          Child in Need
CPP          Child Protection Plan
CIC          Child in Care

| | |
|---|---|
| CL | Care Leaver |
| CYPT | Children & Young People's Team |
| ETE | Employment, Training & Education |
| HOS | Head of Service |
| ICPC | Initial Child Protection Conference |
| ILACS | Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services |
| IRO | Independent Reviewing Officer |
| OSC | Overview & Scrutiny Committee |
| PEP | Personal Education Plan |
| S47 | Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, allowing enquiries to be initiated where a child is suffering from or at risk of harm |
| SEND | Special Education Needs and/or Disability |
| TIAG | Targeted Intervention and Guidance |
| TEH | Targeted Early Help |
| UASC | Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children |
| VS | Virtual School |
| VSH | Virtual School Head |

## 9.0  Officer Contact

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10 April 2024