



Meeting:	Safeguarding Private Member Briefing
Date of meeting:	28 th April 2020
Report Title:	Children's Social Care Monthly Report – Q4 2019/20
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1. Background

Members of the Committee will be aware that the People Directorate has a monthly children's social care report, which contains an overview of the major performance indicators for children's safeguarding and social care.

The Q4 2019/20 edition of the children's social care report (Item 7b) is attached. It includes a summary section with an overview of performance, using RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings and direction of travel for most indicators. Barnsley's historical performance and comparisons with other local authorities are also included.

More detailed information against most indicators can be found in the main body of the report, where members will find graphs, tables and a management performance analysis at the top of each page, which highlights areas of performance considered good and areas where improvement is required.

2. Summary

Below is a summary of key performance issues highlighted in the report.

Early Help Assessments

Trends in previous years show seasonal variations in the numbers of Early Help Assessments (EHAs) completed, 1,419 EHAs had been completed at the end of the year which is 98 less than the 2018/19 result (1,517). The number of interventions closed across the financial year (1,021) was considerably less than the previous year of 1,917.

Contacts

Contacts during 2019/20 (3,511) show a reduction from last year (3,624). The percentage of contacts proceeding to referral rose slightly from 74.4% last year to 78.3% this year.

Referrals

Referral numbers rose slightly this year to 2,743 compared to last year 2,676. Expressed as a rate per 10,000 under 18 year olds, the year to date figure at the end of the year was 540.1; remaining below the 2018/19 statistical neighbour (627.0) and national (544.5) averages. We continue to see a high proportion of referrals going on to assessment, with 98.9% this year which is an improvement from 97.2% last year.

Re-referrals peaked at 23.8% in Q1, but have since fallen significantly quarter-on-quarter, with just 12.3% in Q4. Our year end average of 17% is currently below our target (18%) and the 2018/19 Statistical Neighbour average (19%), as well as the national (23%) and regional (25%) averages.

Assessments

The number of assessments undertaken has increased slightly from 2,742 last year to 2,780 this year. The rate of assessments for the year to date of 547.4 per 10,000 0-18 population has increased from 530.9 last year and is below the 2018/19 statistical neighbour (734) but above the national (539.3) average.

The average percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days of referral remained high through 2019/20 at 99.1%, well above the 2018/19 national (83.1%) and statistical neighbour (77.2%) averages.



Performance for the percentage of assessments undertaken in under 20 working days has dropped from 35.1% last year to 34.2% this year. 2019/20 performance is just below target (35%), yet this is still above the 2018/19 statistical neighbour (26.4%) and national (32%) averages.

The proportion of assessments ending in no further action has dropped from 36.6% last year to 20.6% in 2019/20.

Section 47 Investigations

The number of S47 investigations undertaken reduced in Q4 following successive increases for four consecutive quarters but there are more this year compared to last, up from 942 to 1,139 in 2019/20. When expressed as a rate per 10,000, the year to date figure (224.3) is well above our outturn for 2018/19 (185.5). This is also above the 2018/19 national benchmark (168.3), but well below our statistical neighbour average (232), although the gap has closed.

Although percentage of S47s converting to child protection conferences has been largely consistent year on year (36%) and remains below the 2018/19 statistical neighbour (39%) and national (38.5%) averages. However, quarterly performance this year shows more variation, with performance in the second half of the year being comparatively higher than the first half. The figure for Q4 is above the average for the last 12 months (36%).

The proportion of Section 47 investigations ending in no further action increased last year, peaking at 33.8% in Q3. Figures for Q4 continue to show improvement, with just 10.3% of S47s ending in no further action. For the year to date, the figure was 12.9%, a drop against the 2018/19 outturn of 28.4%.

Child Protection (CP)

The number of children with a CP plan at the end of the year (285) is still 39 more than the 2018/19 figure (246). That figure equates to a rate of 56.1 per 10,000 under 18 year olds, above the Barnsley outturn for 2018/19 (48.5) and the national average (43.7), but below our statistical neighbour (59) average.

Performance remains strong for timeliness of initial child protection conferences (ICPC). The proportion of conferences within timescale for the year is 89.4%, well above target (60%) as well as the 2018/19 statistical neighbour (79%) and national (79%).

The proportion of children becoming subject of a child protection (CP) plan for a second or subsequent time ever reduced to 12 in Q4, having been much higher at 40 in Q3. Throughout the last year, 67 children have been subject to a CP Plan for a second or subsequent time ever, equating to 16.8%. While this is double the proportion from last year (8.8%), performance remains below the 2018/19 statistical neighbour (21%), and national (20.8%) averages.

7 CP plans were open for 2 years or more at the end of the year [REDACTED]
This equates to 2.5% of all plans, remaining below the 3.3% target, but now above the 2018/19 statistical neighbour (2.2%) and national (2.1%) averages.

[REDACTED]

Performance for the timeliness of child protection reviews has remained at or close to 100% since May 2016, with a 99.3% year to date average. This is above 2018/19 statistical neighbour (91.3%) and national (91.8%) averages. The timeliness of child protection visits has remained close to 100% since December 2016, with 98.9% in Q4 and 99.3% for the year to date.



Care Proceedings

The number of new proceedings cases has increased slightly from 64 in 2018/19 to 66 this year. However, the average duration of open proceedings cases has dropped in the same period, from 25.9 weeks to 22.2 weeks. The average age of concluding cases has risen to 36.2 weeks at year end compared with 28.2 weeks in 2018/19.

Looked After Children

The number of looked after children remained stable at 303 at the end of 2019/20 from 301 last year. Barnsley's current rate of LAC (59.7 per 10,000) is well below statistical neighbours average rates (102.5 per 10,000) and below the national average (65.0 per 10,000). The number of children coming into care during the year was 129, just below the number leaving at 130.

The proportion of looked after children with three or more placements (in the previous 12 months) dropped from 11% last year to 7% this year. This is below the 10% target, and continues to compare well against 2018/19 statistical neighbour (9.5%) and national (10%) averages.

The proportion of children looked after continuously for 2.5 years, and in their current placement for more than 2 years, declined to 59.4% for the year, below the 71% target, as well as 2018/19 statistical neighbour (68.5%) and national (69%) averages.

2019/20 also saw a significant reduction in the number of looked after children going missing. There were 131 incidents of children going missing this year; a drop from 274 in 2018/9.

The proportion of looked after child cases reviewed within timescales was above target (95%) at 99% for the year. The proportion of LAC visits in time (98.9%) was in line with last year (98.8%) but below target (100%).

The proportion of health assessments for looked after children completed on time was 99% for 2019/20, improving slightly from 95.7% the year before. The proportion of children looked after for 12 months or more who have had a dental assessment declined slightly, falling to 99% from 99.5% in 2018/19. Performance locally remains well above the 2018/19 national and statistical neighbour averages for both of these indicators.

The proportion of looked after children (aged 4 to 16 years inclusive) recorded as having a completed Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire was 73.9% for the year, remaining below the 75% target.

The proportion of looked after children with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) remained high at 99.5% though just below the 100% target. The proportion with a termly PEP also dropped just below the target of 98%, recording 95.7% at year end.

Quality of Schools Attended by Looked after Children

The proportion of looked after children attending schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted improved this year, rising to 78.9% from 75.3% in 2018/19.

School Attendance and Absence of Looked after Children

School attendance for looked after children in primary declined slightly in 2019/20, from 96.8% last year to 96.7%. Attendance for secondary school age looked after children showed a similar marginal reduction year on year from 94.3% to 95%.

The proportion of looked after children with one or more fixed term exclusion (FTE) reduced from 2018/19. For primary aged children, the figure improved from 3.2 to 2.1%. For secondary school aged looked after children, the figure dropped from 24.2% to 12.9%.



Adoption

34 children were adopted in 2019/20; this shows a reduction compared with 2018/19, when 50 children were adopted. With the exception of 2013/14, Barnsley's performance has remained well above statistical neighbours, regional and national benchmarks. Our 2018/19 performance ranked first nationally.

In relation to the timeliness of our adoption processes, against the target of 120 days between a placement order and a child being matched, timescales increased to 289.6 days, from 212.4 last year.

Care leavers

Reporting for care leavers can fluctuate significantly due to the small numbers of young people in the cohort.

Performance for the year show that 65.6% of the cohort aged 19-21 were engaged in EET. This shows an improvement from 62.5% in 2018/9. Comparatively, the data is well above the 2018/19 statistical neighbour (49.6%) and national (52%) averages.

The timeliness of care leaver visits improved in 2019/20, rising to 91.6%. This is an improvement from 78.4% last year.

Children in Need

There were 1,866 open Child in Need (CIN) cases at the end of 2019/20, an increase from 1448 the previous year. When comparing against 2018/19 benchmarks, Barnsley's rate of 367.4 remains significantly lower than Stat Neighbours (464) but above the National average (334.2).

Caseloads

Data for the end of 2019/20 shows largely stable average caseload numbers for most teams. Average caseloads for the Children in Care / Future Directions team have however increased since last year, rising to 18.9 in 2019/20 from 16.3 in 2018/19.

Caseloads are monitored fortnightly by managers and arrangements are in place to help mitigate particularly high caseloads.

Recommendations

The committee is asked to review the attached report and consider any areas for investigation or improvement which can be agreed for formal detailed discussion at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Please note that an update on the impact of Coronavirus on all services, including Children's Social Care will be discussed by the Council's Cabinet on Wednesday 29th April; the papers for which will be available on this link on Tuesday 21st April:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=135&Mid=5786&Ver=4>

4. Attachments/background papers

- Item 7b - Children's Social Care Monthly Report – March 2020 – Year End (attached)

5. Possible Areas for Consideration

- What areas of performance are you particularly pleased with this year?



- How do you ensure that the pressure on children's social care is evenly spread across the teams?
- Of all the 'missing' incidents, how many of the children could potentially be engaging in 'risky behaviour'?
- What choice and information do children and young people have about their placement, for example, do they get to meet potential foster carers or visit children's homes before they go live there?
- If children have to move placement, what arrangements are made to keep them at the same school, for example transport?
- What do you know about the children who experience a change in placement?
- How often are PEPs/TPEPs audited for quality?
- How do you celebrate the individual achievements of looked after children?
- Are you satisfied that children are supported to maintain relationships with people that are significant to them?
- What support is given to foster carers and young people themselves about promoting healthy lifestyles?