

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 05/12

- Date: May 2012
- Briefing paper to: All Members of the Children and Adults Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Purpose: Further to an action noted at this committee on 14th March 2012 to brief members on the following points: -
- The number of children and young people who cease to have a Child Protection Plan (CPP) / are taken out of care
 - The numbers of children and young people waiting for adoption and the numbers that are successfully adopted
 - Outcomes of referrals.

CPPs ceasing

The number of Children and Young People (CYP) subject to CPPs at the end of March 2012 was 366. This is an increase of 30% from 286 in April 2011 and should be seen in the context of an increase of 50% in referrals to Children's Social Care, from 3723 to 5364, in the same period. Another significant factor in the rise of CPPs has been an excess of processes to be followed, principally CYP being subject to both a CPP and being a 'looked after' child subject to a plan for 'looked after' children. This adversely impacts on the time available for social workers to progress cases in a timely way and can create drift in achieving satisfactory outcomes.

The number of CYP who have ceased to be the subject of CPPs in 2011 – 2012 is 259 but 49% (126) of these plans ceased from Dec 2011 – March 2012 and the most significant decrease was in March 2012 when 37 (14%) plans ceased. This means that the number of CPPs decreased from 386 in Q3 to 366 in Q4 2011 - 2012.

The decrease in the number of CYP subject to plans has been the result of the work led by the principal social worker to reduce the processes mentioned above as recommended in Professor Munro's review of Child Protection. Future work will concentrate on ensuring that work is completed in a timely way and therefore decreasing the number of CYP subject to plans for more than 12 – 18 months.

CYP taken out of care – ceasing to be ‘looked after’.

The number of CYP ‘looked after’ has risen from 427 at the end of March 2011 to 446 at the end of March 2012 although the increase flattened in Q4 following the highest figure of 450 in Jan 2012. Historically the duty of the local authority to provide care for homeless 16 –17 year olds under the Southwark Judgement has led to a dramatic increase in the number of 16 – 17 year olds in care but although this number was still high in Q1 and Q2 at 28 and 20 respectively it had decreased to 8, its lowest figure since 2009/10, in Q4 2011/12.

The number of CYP who ceased to be ‘looked after’ by the Local Authority in 2011 –2012 was 176 against the 200 CYP who began to be ‘looked after’ in the same period. In Q4 the management team reviewed the arrangements for CYP becoming ‘looked after’ and agreed the following actions

- Responsibility for entry to care decisions to be at Service Manager or above
- Work with the teams to ensure that the primary reason for entry to care is to safeguard a child
- Work to be done with other agencies on understanding the criteria for entry to care.

The work by the principal social worker to reduce the processes mentioned above should impact positively on the amount of time social workers have to concentrate on rehabilitating CYP home where it is safe to do so.

Number of Children awaiting adoption and the numbers successfully adopted.

At the end of March 2012 there were 48 children awaiting adoption. This figure can be analysed as follows.

- 21 have been placed for adoption i.e. they are in their adoptive placements awaiting an adoption order.
- 7 have adoptive families found for them but are awaiting a formal ‘match’ with these families at the adoption panel.
- 2 have been placed with foster carers who are applying for a special guardianship order (another order under which permanence can be achieved for children)
- 18 children are being sought a new home by the homefinding team.

In addition 10 children who were to have been placed for adoption now have long term fostering as their plan for permanence as it has not been possible to match them successfully with an adoptive family. In 2011/12

- 19 children were placed for adoption.
- 41 children were approved for adoption an increase of 57% on 2010/11
- 22 adopters were approved an increase of 15% on 2010/11

- 23 children were placed for adoption
- 16 adoption orders were granted
- 6 special guardianship orders were granted.

There are currently 15 approved adoptive families in Medway all but 2 are linked with children. There were 58 enquiries from adults considering adoption in 2011/12 a reduction of 22% on 2010/11. The availability of adopters is a growing local challenge when working towards the targets set out in the new national adoption scorecard.

Outcomes of Referrals

The number of referrals to Children's Social Care began to rise in 2008/09 the period following the death of Baby Peter. They have risen from 2849 (237 per month) in 2008/09 to 5346 (447 per month) in 2011/12. There has been a particularly sharp increase of 50% in 2011/12 from 3723 (310 per month) in 2010/11 to 5364 (447 per month). The vast majority of referrals are made to the Woodlands and Redvers Referral and Assessment teams.

The duty managers in these teams consider whether the referrals meet the multi-agency thresholds for assessment or interventions – including child protection. Referrals considered to need assessment are allocated to a social worker to undertake an Initial Assessment. If a referral does not meet the thresholds the response is to signpost it to other services and to advise that Children's Services will not be taking any further action. Other services may advise or undertake a Common Assessment Framework Assessment (CAF).

56% of referrals received an Initial Assessment. The difference between the number of referrals and initial assessments may be explained by the

- Referrer's understanding of the multi-agency thresholds
- Referrer's understanding of the child's needs.
- Availability of universal and preventative services
- Amount of CAFs being completed and the co-ordination of the services identified as needed by the child by a CAF.

The principal social worker has delivered a number of development sessions to other agencies on the CAF and CAF lead coordinators are now more active.

The committee will continue to be updated on trends, issues and actions through the quarterly performance reporting.

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