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Monitoring Safeguarding Practice

Purpose

- 1.2 The report provides a recent overview of how Derby Children Services monitors the quality of safeguarding practice. Given that a stable and competent workforce is the pre-requisite for safeguarding children and young people and in driving forward improvements, this report also outlines current pressures and performance within the service.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the content of the report, current pressures and plans in place to address future challenges.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 Maintaining a safe environment where good social work can flourish is dependent upon having sufficient, stable, competent and an experienced workforce and management.

Supporting information

- 4.1 **Social Work Survey.**
Gaining the experience and voice of social workers is critically important in understanding how effective the organisation is functioning and responding to safeguarding matters during COVID. By being able to compare the voice and experience of Derby social workers to those regionally and nationally, Derby is able to understand and learn as an organisation where its children's services can develop. In December 2020, the 162 children's social workers in Derby City Council were asked to complete the Local Government Association Social Work Health Check survey against Employer Standards and Covid19 response by Local Authorities. Results were provided in February 2021.
3227 social workers replied across the UK and 412 social workers across the East Midlands responded. For Derby there were 67 respondees which represented 41% of its own social worker workforce. The survey comprised 59 questions in total.

Regional and national comparison

Standard	Score	East Midlands	National
Standard 1 - Strong and Clear Social Work Framework	80	81	81
Standard 2 - Effective workforce planning systems	74	74	77
Standard 3 - Safe Workloads and Case Allocation	72	74	75
Standard 4 - Well-being	67	69	74
Standard 5 - Supervision	69	65	74
Standard 6 - CPD - Continuous Professional Development	70	63	69
Standard 7 - Professional Registration	78	79	79
Standard 8 - Strategic Partnerships	85	80	79
Employee Contribution	87	84	86
Tensions*	84	79	81
Overall satisfaction	80	68	74
Desire to stay	82	71	76
COVID	73	72	77
Number of respondents	67	412	3,227

- 4.3 The grading apportioned is as follows, green is healthy with mean score of 75+. Amber is guided as an area to “monitor” with score of 51-74 and red is urging improvement with reverse score either under 50 or over 75 for that category.

Derby performs comparably against all Employer Standards of practice tested and there are no critical areas of immediate attention. The area “tensions” asked one specific question, *“I am required to more with less resources”*. The score is not dissimilar to both the region and national response. Given demand has significantly increased, this remains a constant challenge to address for senior leaders.

Standard 1 survey questions (4) related to clarity of role and accountability as defined by the local authority, that there is a balance of professional challenge and workers consider they can exercise their professional judgement.

Standard 2 questions (3) related to encouragement of professional development and fair and equal treatment of staff

Standard 3 questions (5) related to control over workload and knowing where to get help.

Standard 4 questions (10) related to time able for self-care, team discussion, recognition of emotional demands, feeling safe at work. Whilst this collectively was the lowest area scored it had the highest number of questions. Specific questions that scored the highest asked about feeling cared for by management and the organisation being inclusive and anti-racist, with score of 75 and 74 respectively.

Standard 5 questions (6) related to quality of supervision and how managers enable reflection

Standard 6 questions (7) related to annual appraisals and professional development.

Standard 7 questions (6) related to social work registration process and confidence

Standard 8 questions (2) related to partnership working and clarity of employers recruitment policy to social worker posts

Employee Contribution (3) related to confidence in role, pride of job and recommending Derby as employer to others (83)

4.4 Whilst there were no areas requiring an immediate improvement. There were 4 questions that resulted in score within the 50 – 60 range. The four areas were

- Control over workload (59)
- Access to trade unions (59)
- Dedicated time for CDP (55)
- During COVID, feeling positive/ able to cope most of the time (59)

The senior leadership team within children's services have considered these and have put in place the following actions to address

- Monthly monitoring of caseloads and commitment to upper maximum and minimum caseloads for all staff
- Weekly lunchtime reflective sessions by theme
- Enabled office-based working to help with isolation and time to undertake professional development.
- Facilitated access to vaccinations for all eligible frontline workers to provide confidence in working within the community

4.4 Pressures and Performance

During February 2021, there had been an increase in demand compared to the same period in 2019 for children in care and child protection. Average caseloads remain stable and agency workers kept to a minimum.

- There are 65 more children in care than compared to the same period in 2019 – rise of 11%
- There are 79 more children subject to child protection plans than compared to the same period in 2019 – rise of 20%.

Overall performance remains good over the average past 6 months September 20 – February 21

- 95% of single assessments completed in statutory timescales.
- 97% of CIN reviews completed in timescales
- 85% of child protection visits completed in line with the plan, with 94% of reviews completed in target timescales.
- 90% of statutory visits were held in timescale for children in care.
- 100% of children in care reviews were completed in timescale
- 59% of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 working days.

Performance relating to timeliness of initial children protection plans is an area for improvement. There is a direct correlation between the increase in numbers of child protection particularly resultant of COVID and the respective service area's ability to maintain initial conferences within 15 working days. As assurance to the committee, all children that meet the child protection threshold have a safety plan in place and intervention is not prevented from being implemented at point of identification. There is no child left unsafe. The progress is kept under close scrutiny by the Assured Safeguarding Board comprising Director Children's Service, Chief Executive and Lead Member. Additional temporary resources have been secured to meet demand.

4.5 **Serious Safeguarding Incidents**

The criteria under Working Together 2018 requires the statutory Safeguarding Partnership (Local Authority, Health and Police) to consider whether a Child Safeguarding Practice Review should be undertaken when the following occurs;

- Significant harm or death to a child educated otherwise than at school
- Where a child is seriously harmed or dies while in the care of a local authority, or while on (or recently removed from) a child protection plan
- Cases which involve a range of types of abuse
- Where the case may raise issues relating to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children in institutional settings

Reviews can be a formal Child Safeguarding Practice Review or a Learning Reviews. Both are required to be reported to the National Panel. The overall purpose is to explore how practice can be improved more generally through changes to the system as a whole and importantly through systemic learning. The learning gained by the local area is required to be published.

4.6 New born babies have been found to be particularly vulnerable especially during COVID and there has been a national rise of deaths of children under one years old. In response, the Derby/Derbyshire Chief Officers group have agreed to strengthen safeguarding arrangements discussed the activity being carried out across the partnership to safeguard vulnerable babies. The following have been agreed:

- 1 Safety and welfare of babies is a whole partnership priority.
- 2 Longer term assurance of managerial oversight established to evidence sustained improvement and reduction of serious harm to babies
- 3 A partnership lead will be appointed to coordinate the strategic response to improving the safety and welfare of babies and drive forward local safeguarding arrangements. (Dedicated Safeguarding Nurse and Chair of Child Death Overview Panel)

The strategy is attached as appendix 1 and contains the three steps to baby safety. Safe Sleep, Safe Handling and Safe Space

4.7 Derby has both adopted the Keeping Baby Safe Strategy and have our own champion who has helped to shape the strategy and relevant training package that is now open for all multi agency practitioners to attend. As additional measures, Derby has prioritised direct visits to all open case babies under one year. Regular direct visits are maintained and any new referrals are again prioritised for direct visits. This is best practice.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 There is an ongoing programme of engagement with social work staff and managers to ensure a direct line of sight and communication between senior managers and the front line.

Other options

- 6.1 There is openness to exploring all options to improve safeguarding practice.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 None for this report

Legal implications

- 8.1 Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to provide sufficient social workers to act as key workers to children in care, children subject to child protection plans and to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and to assess children in need.

Climate implications

- 9.1 None.

Other significant implications

- 10.1 None identified.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu HOS Legal Services	17 March 2021
Finance	Janice Hadfield HOS Finance	16 March 2021
Service Director(s)	Suanne Lim, Service Director Early Help & Children's Social Care	15 March 2021
Report sponsor Other(s)	Andy Smith Strategic Director of People	15 March 2021
Background papers: List of appendices:	Appendix 1 - Keep Babies Safe Strategy	

