

Monitoring Safeguarding Practice

Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide assurance that safeguarding practice is robust and responsive to the needs of children and families in Derby. The purpose is also to ensure that relevant strategic leaders have an overview of the impact of frontline child protection practice and provide the high support, high challenge needed.
- 1.2 The report contains workforce information, risk, analysis and the implications for safeguarding for the department and Derby City. The focus of the report outlines the impact that demand is having on safeguarding arrangements and the steps being taken to mitigate any risks.
- 1.3 There is a separate action log which details specific actions for monitoring in the meeting and for closing the loop.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the content of the report 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 experienced workforce and management.

Supporting information

- 4.1 **Statutory work**

Contacts

The table below captures the volume of contacts and conversion rates over the year.

Prior Year	Total Contacts Prior Year	Current Year	Total Contacts Current Year	Increase in Contacts	% Contacts Threshold Not Met Current Year	Current Year conversion (contact to referral) %
Apr-21	2259	Apr-22	2253	-0.3%	38.3%	11.9%
May-21	2460	May-22	2519	2.4%	40.5%	11.0%
Jun-21	2703	Jun-22	2770	2.5%	38.6%	11.1%
Jul-21	2417	Jul-22	2828	17.0%	33.1%	8.9%
Aug-21	2052	Aug-22	2326	13.4%	37.9%	10.4%
Sep-21	2597	Sep-22	2837	9.2%	29.5%	12.2%
Oct-21	2433	Oct-22	2526	3.8%	45.5%	11.8%
Nov-21	2293	Nov-22	3168	38.2%	36.0%	8.8%
Dec-21	2268	Dec-22	2452	8.1%	28.2%	10.0%

Referrals and assessment

Prior Year	Total referrals Prior Year	Current Year	Total referrals Current Year	Increase	Current Year conversion (referral to assessment) %	Current Year assessments leading to No Further Action %
Apr-21	372	Apr-22	280	-92	72.5%	56.2%
May-21	370	May-22	268	-102	76.9%	37.4%
Jun-21	406	Jun-22	314	-92	70.7%	49.1%
Jul-21	398	Jul-22	252	-146	75.0%	44.4%
Aug-21	310	Aug-22	241	-69	77.6%	49.7%
Sep-21	438	Sep-22	330	-108	71.5%	42.8%
Oct-21	287	Oct-22	289	2	67.1%	41.8%
Nov-21	289	Nov-22	272	-17	73.9%	28.9%
Dec-21	304	Dec-22	236	-68	71.2%	5.4%

*Recent months NFA Assessments may appear lower as assessments will still be in progress

Child Protection Enquiries (s47)

Prior Year	Total section 47 enquiries Prior Year	Current Year	Total section 47 enquiries Current Year	Current Year conversion (s47 to ICPC)	Current Year conversion (ICPC to Child Protection Plan)
Apr-20	75	Apr-21	141	34.0%	86.2%
May-20	82	May-21	129	38.0%	100.0%
Jun-20	148	Jun-21	158	38.6%	90.0%
Jul-20	141	Jul-21	141	26.2%	100.0%
Aug-20	72	Aug-21	125	31.2%	97.1%
Sep-20	111	Sep-21	102	38.2%	100.0%
Oct-20	143	Oct-21	117	35.9%	94.7%
Nov-20	126	Nov-21	140	36.4%	85.7%
Dec-20	170	Dec-21	134	42.5%	81.2%
Jan-21	124	Jan-22	106	30.2%	96.6%
Feb-21	120	Feb-22	101	27.7%	92.0%
Mar-21	179	Mar-22	167	28.7%	92.3%
Apr-21	141	Apr-22	88	23.9%	83.3%
May-21	129	May-22	151	33.1%	88.0%
Jun-21	158	Jun-22	117	25.6%	88.1%
Jul-21	141	Jul-22	120	23.3%	73.5%
Aug-21	125	Aug-22	114	36.8%	81.6%
Sep-21	102	Sep-22	151	27.2%	82.1%
Oct-21	117	Oct-22	98	16.3%	68.2%
Nov-21	140	Nov-22	105	28.6%	68.2%
Dec-21	134	Dec-22	97	29.9%	80.6%

Summary:

- Contacts from partner agencies remain high and continues to place increased pressure on our statutory services front door. There is work underway with partner organisations to support them with managing demand.
- Domestic abuse remains our highest referral category. Early Help and Children's Social Care are represented in all multi-agency forums for both strategic and operational responses to domestic abuse.
- We continue to embed our overall vision of Stronger Families and Resilient Children. As a result, we have reduced the number of children subject of a child protection plan (more in line with comparator rates) and continue to ensure children are safely cared for within their family units. We are seeing a reduction in the number of children in care but of those who are in local authority care, an increase placed within family and friends' placements.
- Family Group Conferences continues to enable families to utilise their own strengths to mitigate risks to children alongside the Staying Together team who are successfully enabling children to remain within their families.
- There continues to be delays within the courts which is impacting pressures on the child protection teams. A national re-focus on the Public Law Outline aims to address this and we have a local commitment to achieving a target rate of 26 weeks for care proceedings.

- Overall, the rate of re-referrals within 12 months of support ending is in line with national, suggesting that children in Derby are receiving the right support, at the right time, by the right services.
- Since the last update there have been no notifiable serious incidents within Early Help and Children's Social Care.

4.2 Staffing, recruitment, and retention

The below summarises the number of agency workers and long-term absence.

	No of Agency SWs in post	No of SWs on LT sick leave (1 month +)
Total	6	Under 5

Some further information:

- There continues to be a national challenge around the recruitment and retention of qualified social workers. In Derby we are fortunate to have an experienced and stable workforce, with few vacancies. We are not complacent, and we know that this can change, therefore we continue to operate a successful rolling recruitment programme.
- Nationally the use of agency social workers in child protection is high for which there is a government led consultation currently which aims to gain control of the current market. In Derby we do not have a reliance upon agency workers and have few across the service.
- Sickness absence is on a positive direction of travel, with reductions seen across child protection teams. The wellbeing of practitioners in a high stress sector is a focus and contributory factor to ensuring a stable workforce. We ensure that good training opportunities are available, that practitioners have access to supervision from experienced managers, that senior practitioners provide group reflective practice, and that specialist de-briefing is available.

4.3 Caseloads

The below data captures the current caseload averages across the service. Our aspiration would be to work towards an average caseload of 17.

Team	Caseloads
Locality teams	Average: 18
Reception teams	Average: 20
Integrated Disabled Children's Service	Average: 17
Children in Care teams	Average: 19

Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1 Not applicable

Other options

6.1 There are no other options for consideration.

Financial and value for money issues

7.1 The cost of employing children's social workers and front-line managers is significant (over £9 million).

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 N/A

Other significant implications

10.1 **Equalities Impact**

Social Workers provide services to the most vulnerable children in the city and endeavour to improve their life chances in terms of educational attainment, health and safety.

10.2 **Risk Management**

There is a significant risk to the Council of not being able to maintain a sufficient number of qualified and experienced social workers to meet the demands in the city. This is through children suffering unnecessarily and reputational damage from a poor inspection outcome.

10.3 **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- Resilient City

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Alison Bush, Principal Solicitor	24 February 2023
Finance	Janice Hadfield, Head of Finance	24 February 2023
Service Director(s)	Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help & Children's Social Care	23 February 2023
Report sponsor		
Other(s)		

Background papers:	
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Monitoring Safeguarding Practice