

REPORT TO:	Safeguarding, Communities & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
REPORT NO:	HCSC/02/2018
DATE:	28 February 2018
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor William Baldwin (Children's Services and Education)
CONTACT OFFICER:	Audrey Somerton-Edwards (Tel: 295490)
SUBJECT:	Children's Social Care Departmental Service Activity & Performance Half Yearly Update (Quarters 1-2) for 2017/2018
WARD:	N/A

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise elected members of the Safeguarding Communities & Well Being Scrutiny Committee of key performance management information within Children's Social Care Services for the period 1 April 2017 – 30 September 2017. Where appropriate, comparison data such as Welsh averages has also been included. The data provides elected members with the opportunity to monitor performance and discuss any issues that relates to the information provided.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 The core purpose of children's social care services is to:

- Provide support to families in partnership with other agencies that enables them to better care for their child/children.
- Investigate allegations of abuse and take appropriate action to safeguard/promote the welfare of the child.
- Act as corporate parents for those children who cannot be cared for within their own extended family by providing residential or foster care.

- Maintain the full range of adoption services.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Committee formulate their conclusions and recommendations based on the information in the report and the discussion at the meeting.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) To enable the Committee to scrutinise performance and discuss any issues that relate to the information provided in Appendix A.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 In April 2016, the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 was introduced. As a result, the performance framework for both Adults & Children's Social Care changed. In order to understand both demand for services and contribute to driving improvements to service delivery, the Children's Social Care Department have taken the decision to retain many of the previous national indicators and keep them as "local" indicators.
- 4.2 A workshop for Members was held on 8 November 2017 and as a result, the performance information provided in Appendix A has been provided. The content of Appendix A was discussed at the Members' Workshop and contains a mix of both national and local measures/information. A recommendation for the Safeguarding, Communities and Well-being Scrutiny Committee is to provide the current format and to review every 12 months, in line with any potential changes or additions to the national framework.

Front of House Services

- 4.3 The Children's SPOA (formerly MASH) is the single point of access for the Department and the team support timely information sharing, informed decision making and prompt access to services for those families in need of support. All contacts coming into the department require recording on our case management system, liaison with other agencies and a manager's decision within 24 hours of receipt. Contacts can lead to information and advice being provided, allocation for assessment and/or are open cases and will be passed on to the team originally involved. In each case, a contact generates work.
- 4.4 In the first two quarters of 2017/18, 5,549 contacts were received. This is a slight increase to the first two quarters of 2016/17 and it is expected that our annual figures will have increased by 5.1% from last year.

Appendix A, Figure 1

- 4.5 Police referrals continue to account for nearly half of all contacts received by the Department. A significant number of these referrals will involve children who are placed in Wrexham by other Local Authorities into private residential homes and independent foster placements. Children placed in Wrexham by other Local Authorities who go missing or are involved in an incident which requires police intervention will automatically generate a referral to the Children's SPoA. Staff in SPoA will have to contact the placing authority and arrange a strategy meeting to address the concerns and agree a plan to reduce the risks (if appropriate). Each of these pieces of work requires evidence of risk analysis and decision making, as well as the updating of the electronic social care database, RAISe.
- 4.6 Despite the increase in the number of contacts, decision making remains excellent and consistent with our performance in previous years. In the first two quarters of 2017/18, the Department are recording decisions on contacts within 24 hours over 99% of the time.

Appendix A, Table 3

Assessments

- 4.7 Since the introduction of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act, the process for assessment has changed to a proportionate 42-day assessment. This replaces the previous "initial" and "core" assessments. In addition, operational practice focusses more on What Matters to the young person and the family and identifies the best way to achieve their personal outcomes.
- 4.8 The new national performance framework includes a requirement to monitor and report performance of those assessments which are concluded within 42 days. The Welsh Average for 2016/17 is 90.8% and Wrexham fell just below this at a reported 85.3%. Quarters 1 and 2 of 2017/18 reported 86% and 68.8%, respectively. We can link our dip in performance against this measure to vacancies and recruitment issues in the Assessment & Intervention Team (AIT), which is addressed later in this report. To ensure there is constant monitoring, timescales are reviewed weekly at Team Manager, Service Manager and Head of Department level. **Appendix A, Table 1, PMC024**
- 4.9 Although it is not required by Welsh Government, the Department also monitor those assessments which we know took longer than 42 days to complete and have set ourselves a local target of no longer than 60 days. There are several reasons why an assessment cannot be completed within 60 days including lack of cooperation from family members, delays in obtaining information from partner agencies and in many cases, family dynamics which prevent workers from assessing the family together with separate interviews/meetings necessary. Despite this, the Department have consistently performed below this local target with Quarter 1 at 51.5 days and Quarter 2 at 59.7 days. **Appendix A, Table 7**

- 4.10 For every child receiving a comprehensive assessment, the Department also continue to monitor that where appropriate, all children are seen. The requirement to see children as part of their assessment is contained in the Code of Practice; however, has not been included as a national indicator. As such, Wrexham have taken the decision to report against this, locally. Wrexham have consistently been the best performing authority in Wales for ensuring that children are seen as part of their assessment with Quarter 1 at 99.2% and Quarter 2 at 98.7%. Wrexham Children's Social Care Department remain confident that children are seen as part of their assessment, their views and wishes listened to and considered as part of their Care & Support plans. **Appendix A, Figure 3**

Reviews

- 4.11 Each child in need of Care and Support, Looked After by the Local Authority or subject to a Child Protection Plan are required to have their Care and Support Plans reviewed within statutory timescales. For those children who are classified as a Child in Need of Care & Support, their plans should be reviewed every 6 months (although Wrexham have a local requirement to conduct the first review within 3 months); for those children who are looked after, their first review should be within 20 working days of becoming looked after, a second review no more than three months from the first review and all subsequent reviews within 6 months of the previous review. Children who are subject to child protection plans have their first review within 3 months of the initial Child Protection Conference and subsequent reviews within 6 months of the last case conference for the duration they are subject to the plan.
- 4.12 Performance figures for statutory reviews held within timescales are not reported nationally. As a local data collection, Wrexham are pleased with its performance over the last four years which has consistently been above 90% held within timescale. **Appendix A, Table 9**

Prevention

- 4.13 The PASS (Prevention and Social Care Support) Team have gone from strength to strength over the last two reporting periods. The most recent developments in this team include a provision to deliver a service to families within a social care setting such as Care and Support Plans, Child Protection and families within the Public Law Outline (PLO) process.
- 4.14 In the quarter 2 of 2017/18, a temporary Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator was appointed using Edge of Care Funding until March 2018. This appointment is to assist the Team Manager in the undertaking of Family Group Meetings. The Family Group Meeting will provide support to social workers in exploring extended family support, assessments, supervised contact and family placements.
- 4.15 For those children who are placed in Wrexham, there is a statutory duty to conduct a "Return Home Interview" if they have been reported missing from their present residence by the police. The purpose of the return home

interview is to highlight any young person who is vulnerable and possibly subject to sexual exploitation.

- 4.16 Again, utilising Edge of Care Funding until March 2018, a Family Support Worker has been temporarily appointed within the PASS Team to undertake these statutory reviews. The post was advertised and filled in September 2017.

Adoption

- 4.17 The North Wales Adoption Service, in partnership with the six local authorities, is responsible for providing the following services:

Recruitment, Training, Assessment and Supporting prospective and approved adopters;

Matching children to adopters;

S98 Access to records, Search and Intermediary Services for adopted adults and their relatives;

Birth Parent counselling;

Adoption Support;

Development and management of joint adoption panels;

Partner of Parent Adoptions;

Adoptions with a Foreign Element.

- 4.18 The North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) continue to work efficiently to place children for whom a return to parents is not an option. Where there are viable family members to care for children, the service offers advice to help them to remain within their birth family.
- 4.19 Across North Wales, there are currently 27 families under assessment for adoption. 3 of these are foster carers applying to adopt a child in placement, 6 of these are second time adopters and 8 are partner of parent adoptions.
- 4.20 Of the 16 general adopters being assessed there are 5 second time adopters who will be considering a younger child due to the age of the child already placed. 2 are currently considering sibling groups of two, 4 are considering 1 or 2 children and 4 are considering 1 child only. Two families will consider a child up to the age of 6 and 7 years the remainder have a preference for 0-5 years. One family is currently on hold. In Wrexham, a total of 5 adopters are currently under assessment with 1 being a partner of an existing parent.
- 4.21 At the end of Quarter 1, there was 1 child aged 6+ awaiting a match in Wrexham and the delays for this match were due to the need for therapeutic support. At the end of Quarter 2, a potential match was being considered.
- 4.22 In the autumn of 2017, an independent review was undertaken of the service, of which the implications and recommendations are currently being considered.

Families First

- 4.23 During 2017, the county wide Families First Programme has been managing a transitional phase from the old Families First guidance to the new. The previous programme had as its focus combatting child poverty. The new programme is focussed upon increasing family resilience and the prevention of ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences. The new programme will have within it 4 main areas of provision: Parenting Services, Disability Services, Youth Support and TAC (Wrexham’s Team around the Family Model). The process to recommission the Families First programme of services has to be completed by April 1st 2018.
- 4.24 Wrexham Council took the decision in December 2016 to use whole of the transitional year (2016/17) to gradually change all parts of the Families First Programme in order to ensure compliance by April 1st 2018. The co-produced commissioning process for disability services started with a large engagement and consultation event in February 2017 and for Parenting services, the process started in the same way in June. Each event was followed by a number of meetings with a wide range of providers to crystallise which services were needed in Wrexham and how they should be provided. Informed by these meetings, the council then advertised two external frameworks for disability and parenting services, and appointed organisations to the frameworks; 4 organisations for disability services and 10 organisations for parenting services. The commissioning process has also informed the reshaping of internally provided services for disabled children and their families and for vulnerable parents.
- 4.25 Disability services will include services for children only, for parents only and for whole families. Parenting Services will include one to one provision, evidence-based programmes, informal support, parent drop in groups, relationship counselling and crèche provision. All externally provided services procured through the new frameworks and those provided by council teams will begin between October 1st 2017 and March 31st 2018. The TAC will continue as it is currently, as no changes are needed to ensure compliance. Youth Support and Play Development services are currently under review, with services being reshaped for the new programme. The new Youth Support provision will be provided for vulnerable young people including Young Carers and will start running from April 1st 2018.
- 4.26 The new co-produced approach to commissioning services has resulted in a creative and lively debate and very good engagement from current and a number of new service providers. The range and amount of service provision in Wrexham for disabled children and their families and for other vulnerable parents will increase and become significantly more diverse in the new Families First Programme.

Workforce and Training

- 4.27 The Children’s Social Care Department currently has the following vacancies:

Team	Vacancy
Leaving Care	1 Social Worker
Looked After Children	1 Social Worker
Assessment & Intervention Team	6 Social Workers
PASS Team	1 Family Aid Worker 1 Family Support Worker 1 Waking Hours Worker
Fostering	2 Social Workers
Safeguarding People Team	2 Independent Review & Safeguarding Officers

Vacancies are all covered by substantive or agency staff.

- 4.28 Human Resources are working with Children's Social Care to undertake a recruitment and retention review for Children's Social Care Social Workers and Independent Review Officers, as this was identified as a cause for concern by the Head of Department. This exercise included a review of turnover and vacancy levels, a review of job descriptions and pay rates for similar roles within our neighbouring authorities (and therefore competitors for the same workforce) and research of other good practice to support retention and recruitment of hard to recruit roles. This was to identify where there may be issues, the causes of these issues and to help identify potential solutions and strategies that will enable an improvement on recruitment and retention.
- 4.29 There was a focussed and high profiled recruitment campaign carried out in Summer 2017, followed by smaller scale recruitment exercises in August – October. Human Resources have reviewed the impact of the recruitment to identify ideas that could be used to improve future recruitment campaigns and increase the rates of applications. Human Resources are currently preparing a new focussed campaign in light of this recruitment evaluation.
- 4.30 The proposed changes to the NJC (Green Book) employee pay structure which included changes to take out current overlap of grades (on which the Trade Unions have balloted their members on) if agreed, will assist the service with more attractive starting salaries for recruitment adverts. Also subject to the evaluation of the recent recruitment exercises, further ideas to address recruitment and retention will need to be considered and raised with Senior Management Team for agreement, if appropriate.

Service Developments

- 4.31 The Department's Safeguarding People Team have continued the positive engagement work they have been doing by producing a young person friendly Access to Records leaflet for young people. The leaflet has been provided to assist young people in knowing how and who to contact to access their records and is written in a youth-friendly way. The leaflets now form part of the Looked After Children pack which is distributed to young people when they become looked after by the Local Authority and copies will be handed out by Leaving Care Advisors for those young people who move on to our

Leaving Care service. The Young People in Care Council felt very positive about this information being available and assisted in approving the graphics and content.

- 4.32 This year, the Safeguarding People Team hosted yet another successful White Ribbon Day to promote awareness of domestic abuse and violence against women. Members of the public were present to hear stories from survivors of a variety of forms of abuse and local businesses were engaged to donate door prizes and free giveaways for those survivors who were brave enough to tell their stories. Supporting statements were provided by Joan Lowe, Lead Member for Adult Services and William Baldwin, Lead Member for Children's Services, Wrexham's Senior Management Team, Members and many partner and third party organisations, all of whom the magnitude of this event would not have been possible.
- 4.33 The Department's Policy & Project Officer, Practice Development Manager and Information Governance Manager have been involved in the preparation for the new General Data Protection Regulations, which come into force in May 2018. In quarters 1 and 2 of the reporting year, all three members of the Department have been involved in receiving training and undertaking a scoping analysis of the Department's file structures and personal data storage facilities. A complete review and organisation is required to ensure we are compliant with the new regulations and although the project is resource intensive, the team implementing are doing their utmost to ensure front line staff and managers are not overburdened with exhaustive tasks relating to this project. Presently, the project is running without delays with milestones being achieved ahead of the project plan timeline.
- 4.34 As the General Data Protection Regulations come into force, the Department will be required to contemporaneously keep records of all locations, both physical and virtual, where personal data is stored. The corporate procurement of the FLOWZ IT system will assist with this. At present, the Department has been able to update the FLOWZ system with all information assets owned by the Children's Social Care Department.
- 4.35 Throughout the first two quarters of 2017/18, the Department has continued to work toward the rollout of the new joint Health & Social Care Database, WCCIS (Welsh Community Care Information System). A project board resides over this implementation team with regular input and feedback provided both nationally and regionally. As this system is a national system, there are many factors to consider before decommissioning of our current recording system and rollout of our new system can begin. The project is supported by all Service Managers in Children's Social Care, members of the Information Technology service, Information Governance, Practice Development and Performance leads.
- 4.36 The Project Board meets monthly and receives updates from all Workstream Leads who report on their progress against the identified project milestones. The project also holds a Risk and Issues Log which is reviewed at every meeting. With the membership of the Project Board, any risks or issues

raised can be fully discussed and decisions made as to what mitigation can be put into place to ensure the project continues, without unnecessary delay.

- 4.37 With the “go live” date of May 2018 approaching, the project has gained momentum with a rationalisation and design of forms, the creation of worker/team and manager dashboards, and configuration of local and statutory reports all set as project milestones in the next two quarters.
- 4.38 Of course, as there have been no additional resources for this project, it relies on the continued dedication from existing staff within the Department to ensure this additional work is completed, alongside the tasks associated to the roles they hold.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 **Policy Framework** – The terms of reference for this Committee are aligned to the Council’s Strategic Priority “Children and Young People are Safeguarded” and the content of this report specifically relates to the Council Plan objective Pe3 - “Safeguarding those who are vulnerable.”
- 5.2 **Budget** – As part of the WCBC Budget Monitoring & Control process for 2017/2018, the Children’s Social Care Department is reporting a projected overspend of £991k. The department is experiencing severe demand on its services. There has been an unprecedented increase in Looked After Children between January and September 2017. The department is projecting an overspend of £1,551k in Out of County Residential and Foster placements to meet the demand and complexities of the young people. The department is currently undertaking a review of current Out of County placements with a view of reducing the overspend by £350k to £1,201k. The overspend is netted off by underspends in Business Support (£90k), Child and Family Inclusion (£73k) and departmental wide efficiencies (£47k).
- 5.3 **Legal** – There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.4 **Staffing** – There are no staffing implications arising from this report.
- 5.5 **Equality/Human Rights** – Members are advised to consider the full Equality Impact Assessment which is available at <http://vmwinsqld/equalityisalive/Menu.aspx> report number [PSC/EIA00007/2015](http://vmwinsqld/equalityisalive/Menu.aspx). Members of the public can request a full Equality Impact Assessment from the Contact Officer named in the header box of this report. A summary of the Equality Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 2.
- 5.6 **Risks** – A risk register for Children’s Services has been completed and is regularly updated and takes account of the contents of the attached Performance Report.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The Lead Member of Children's Social Care has been consulted regarding the contents of the attached Performance Report.

7. EVALUATION OF OPTIONS

7.1 Not applicable

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO.