

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
9th September 2010
Corporate Plan – Keeping Children Safe

The Corporate Plan (CIP 7) was amended in May 2010 to respond to recommendations contained in the Ofsted Inspection Report for Safeguarding and Looked After Children published in May 2010. This report outlines progress against key milestones.

Foster care Provision – Improving sufficiency of care provision

The target set was to recruit 10 additional foster caring households each year for 3 years. This is year 2. The implementation of a new Payment for Skills fostering scheme in Plymouth has created attractive remuneration rates and support packages with the aim of giving Plymouth a competitive edge in a pressurised market environment in order to reduce dependence on independent sector placements. In January 2010 there was a comprehensive recruitment campaign. Since April 2010, we have recruited 1 family and friends carer and 3 mainstream carers. By December, we will have 3 additional family and friends carers and 7 mainstream additional foster caring households.

Foster care recruitment and retention continues to be a priority need for children in care particularly in the context of rising numbers of children being admitted to care in 2010.

Workforce Development – Improving the skill set of the workforce

The newly qualified social work programme and the advanced practitioner grades have been introduced. To support the career progression of social workers there is an opportunity and an expectation that social workers have experience of different service areas in order to widen their skills and knowledge base. There is a comprehensive training programme in place.

Range and Sufficiency of Family Support

The family support service has been restructured to redefine service functions and career grades for staff. Family Group Conferencing has been very successful in promoting safe family plans that support children to remain in their own family networks. However, demand has exceeded supply and an investment to save business case has been prepared to create additional capacity.

Actions from Unannounced Ofsted Inspection

▪ **Child Protection Processes and Procedures**

Caseloads were reduced in the Advice and Assessment Service through changes made to the management structure and tightening case transfer arrangements into other services.

In addition Carefirst reconfiguration is in progress with a comprehensive priority action plan. Additional capacity has been created in the ICS delivery team to develop ICT and process changes.

EDRMS has been installed to ensure all case files are electronically linked and easy to access.

▪ **Case Recording**

There is tighter managerial tracking of timeliness of initial and core assessments and completion of initial and core assessments within timescales has improved by 20% in the last quarter for initial assessments.

Quality of recording is ensured through management audits and regular supervision. The quality of assessments has improved with external validation by the announced inspection in March 2010.

▪ **Management and Supervision**

Management capacity has been increased in the Advice and Assessment Service. There has been bespoke training provided to this group of managers leading to demonstrable improvement in the quality of supervision and support provided to staff.

▪ **Thresholds and Workload**

A clear threshold criteria has been introduced and shared with key stakeholders. A threshold manager has been appointed to ensure consistency of response across the service. The continued use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to provide a targeted multi agency response to vulnerable families is vital to the effective control of referrals and caseloads within the Advice and Assessment service.

▪ **CRB Checks**

All staff now have current CRB checks in place and there is a more robust process in place for renewals.

Actions from Announced inspection

- **Management Information Systems**

Management oversight, information systems, social worker and managerial skills have been a focus to improve overall practice, data quality and performance. Tracking tools have been developed to enable managers to understand and address team performance and trends.

- **Case Recording**

Managers have been tasked to authorise all assessments and plans, undertake qualitative file audits. These activities are promoting a more consistent standard of case recording. The Head of Service also randomly audits files and obtains service user feedback on the quality of service they have received.

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26th August 2010