

Subject:	Summary of performance information for children in care		
Date of Meeting:	23 January 2013		
Report of:	Interim Director of Children's Services		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Andy Whippey	Tel: 295391
	Email:	andy.whippey@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE/ EXEMPTIONS

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting is a key responsibility for every local authority. Members are required to have an oversight of the care, well-being and outcomes for all children in care, and to ensure progress for young people leaving care.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of key performance indicators, with an analysis of key issues. Attached is a full report of performance indicators which will be useful as a document of record, to enable regular monitoring by all Members of the Council, as well as Members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members note and scrutinise the information in this report, to ensure full awareness of performance and outcomes for children in care in Brighton and Hove.
- 2.2 That members consider any particular issues they may wish to consider in more depth at future meetings.
- 2.3 That members consider how to relay this information to the broader council to ensure high awareness of the responsibilities for children in care.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Children Looked After Numbers

Whilst the Brighton and Hove numbers of Children in Care remain high in relation to statistical neighbours and the England average, the rate of children looked after per 10,000 children aged under 18 has fallen from 103 as at 31 March 2011 to 98 as at March 2012.

The reason that our rate per 10,000 has fallen despite the number of children looked after remaining unchanged is because the mid-year 2011 projection for

children aged 0-17 based on 2011 Census is 49,900 and the 2010 mid-year projection was 46,900.

The indication is that these numbers will fall in 2013 due to a combination of factors. These include as part of the Family First Strategy children in long-term foster care being cared for under special guardianship arrangements and significant packages being put together in order to prevent the need for some children to become looked after in the first instance.

There were 99 children in care proceedings as at 30th November 2012, down from 165 in December 2011. This will have an impact on overall numbers of Children in Care in the long term.

3.2 Distance Between Home and Placement

There has been a significant media and political interest on the issue of the distance Children in Care are placed from their home authority. The recent interim report of the office of the Children's Commissioner has highlighted the increased risk of exploitation children may be exposed to when placed far from their communities of origin.

The numbers of children placed within 20 miles of Brighton and Hove (this being the performance indicator which is used, recommending that children should be placed within this limit) is very high and above the national average, with 85% of children either placed within 20 miles or placed for adoption compared to the national average of 80%.

3.3 Health and Dental Checks

The percentage of children with Health and Dental checks completed within 12 months continues to be around 80%. This is below the national average of 84.3% and remedial action in consultation with the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children has been implemented.

3.4 Sexual Health and Substance Misuse

A screening tool has been introduced to ensure that there is a comprehensive system to identify young people who are at high risk of developing difficulties relating to substance misuse or sexual health. The expectation is that social workers will be responsible for ensuring this is done with all young people aged 13 and over, midway between the annual health assessment.

The purpose of this tool is to ensure that appropriate interventions are pursued where there is increased risk of young people developing difficulties. It is only a requirement to report substance misuse nationally and sexual health screenings are not reported to DfE.

Current performance is low and an action plan being developed to address this is. We would expect this indicator to show significant improvement within the next 3 months.

3.5 Personal Education Plans (PEP)

PEP activity has seen a significant increase over the last 12 months, with 86% of school age CiC having a PEP completed within 6 months. The Ofsted expectation would be a figure of no less than 95%. Information Officers now have a crucial role in terms of monitoring PEP completion and we expect the completion figure to continue to rise.

There is a more detailed report on educational attainment elsewhere on this agenda.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1 The service regularly consults and engages with children in care, as individuals and through the Children in Care Council.

4.2 The service engages with foster carers, other carers, families and partner agencies.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 Although there are no financial implications as a direct result of the specific recommendations within this report the service areas highlighted in the report encompass a significant part of the children's services budget. For 2012/13 the initial budget allocation for 'Looked After Children' was £25.8m and for 'Children and young people's safety' it was £13.0m. It is vital that these resources are deployed in an efficient and effective manner ensuring the best value for money for the Council.

Finance Officer Consulted: David Ellis Date: 11.01.13

Legal Implications:

5.2 The report sets out some indicators against which members can consider the extent to which it is evidenced that the authority is meeting some basic requirements to promote the welfare of the children for whom the authority holds corporate responsibility. The local authority has an absolute duty of care to all looked after children, and a duty to promote their welfare. The authority must ensure compliance with the regulations and guidance in relation to specific aspects of the care of all looked after children.

Lawyer consulted: Natasha Watson Date 15.01.13

Equalities Implications:

5.3 Children in care generally suffer poorer health, education and life opportunities than other children. The efforts of the social care service, health and the Council as a whole are focused on addressing this imbalance.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Concerted efforts have been made to reduce the numbers of children in care through earlier intervention.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Efforts are made to ensure children and young people in care are protected from risk of harm as victims of crime and do not become young offenders.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Brighton and Hove numbers of children in care are high in comparison with other authorities. A concerted effort into early help may address family issues at an earlier stage.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Health colleagues are fully engaged in the support for children in care.

Corporate / Citywide Implications

- 5.8 Support for children in care is in keeping with the Council priorities for equality and support for the most vulnerable.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The council has reorganised social care services to bring greater focus and consistency to support children in need and children in care. This will be kept under review.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is vital that elected members understand the position of children in care, and their role in supporting better outcomes for them.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: Performance Report for Children in Care