Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

Date: 17th April 2018

Children's Services Integration – Phase 1 Update

Purpose of Report

1.   The Support and Safeguarding Service was launched on the 2nd October 2017, alongside a new single front door to Wiltshire Families and Children's Service, marking the completion of phase 1 of the Children's Services integration Project. The purpose of this report is to provide the Children's Select Committee with an overview of the first 6 months of operation, as requested.

Background

2.   The report presented to Committee on 14th March 2017 outlined the service aims and objectives and these can be found in [appendix 1](). The Early Help Service and Safeguarding and Assessment Service and their associated teams (including the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub - MASH) were directly affected by Phase 1.

3.   The functions affected by the transformation included core safeguarding, child protection, early years, youth support (including employment, education and training) education and statutory functions relating to children within the Council. These continue to be delivered whilst shifting to a model of earlier intervention, all within the original financial envelope.

4.   The following services/functions no longer exist in the same form:
   • Early Help Service
   • Safeguarding and Assessment Service
   • Single Point of contact to the Early Help Service
   • Single Point of Contact for Special Educational Needs and Disability

5.   The statutory functions which were undertaken by the above continue to be delivered. The key change is the way in which the services are delivered to children and families.

Main Considerations for the Council

Council Business Plan

6.   CSI Phase 1 relates to the Council's business plan by working to:
   • Create stronger communities
   • Protect the vulnerable
   • Deliver innovation

The new Support and Safeguarding Service

7.   The Support and Safeguarding Service launched on the 2nd October 2017. The design was in response to research of what works in other Local Authorities, data analysis and feedback from families who told us they wanted:

- Help quicker/earlier.
- More time with workers and support for longer.
- Less professionals involved as too many leads to conflicting advice and can be confusing.
- Professionals who are involved to have a purpose.
- Help before things get really bad.
- Support for the whole family, so they are all listened to and supported.
- Praise for what they have done well so they have a sense of achievement
- To be kept informed as it's hard to hear something they did not know about in a meeting.
- To be spoken to and things explained.
- More than a tick box approach.
- To be told what is going to happen next.

8.   The new service model reflects these by:

- Introducing a new Family Keyworker role - a consistent person working with families to ensure sustained change. The Family Keyworker will hold their own "Support" level cases which may be:

    o   on the edge of social care (Child in Need threshold)
    o   stepping down from social care but require a period of support to ensure changes are sustained
    o   complex early help (CAF) cases that are "stuck"

- Creating mixed teams of both Family Keyworkers and Social Workers within each area team – with the Family Keyworker maintaining a constant relationship with the child/family during any required step up or step down across the social care threshold.
- Improving how requests for service come into the Council, what happens to it once accepted for a service and then how families leave the service.
- Moving to a more holistic, whole family-based approach; launching a new relationship-based model of practice and supporting our staff with a new training and development programme. Relationships are at the heart of good practice and everything we do. The CARE framework is an innovative approach to practice that draws on research and best practice and is underpinned by a psychosocial and relationship based practice model.
- Developing a "one front door" model to access our services. This includes the cross-cutting work across services and functions and the development of the new online "DART" (Digital Assessment & Referral Tool).
- Delivering a fully integrated IT system with the potential for electronic co-working with partner agencies (to be explored).
- Expanding co-location where beneficial (e.g. pilot started in the West team with a drug and alcohol worker from the current provider Turning Point co-located within the team).

The new Support and Safeguarding Service

Staffing

9.   The original total establishment of Social Worker FTEs (full time equivalents) was carried forward to the new service to ensure stability in social work activity.

10. Recruitment of Family Keyworkers has proved easier than the recruitment of experienced Social Workers (for which there is a national shortage). During the last round of recruitment 50 applications were received for the small number of Family Keyworker vacancies currently being held.

11. Co-location with other services and partners has been pursued persistently over the previous months resulting in greater integrated working with domestic abuse, drug and alcohol and child and adolescent mental health teams.

Volumes and activity

12. Given the nature of case work with children and families, six months since launch is too early to fully and confidently measure trends, impact and outcomes. However, some initial feedback is provided to give a flavour of how the changes are beginning to manifest.

13. Early Help staff who transferred into the new service brought their existing case work with them. Their cases are being safely managed to closure and being gradually replaced with new "Support" cases to be worked in the new way.

14. As at the end of January 2018, Family Keyworkers and Senior Family Keyworkers (establishment 49 FTE) were holding 291 open cases (and this will continue to rise); Social Workers, including newly qualified and Aspiring Managers (establishment 88 FTE) were holding 1902 open Child in Need cases. See chart below.
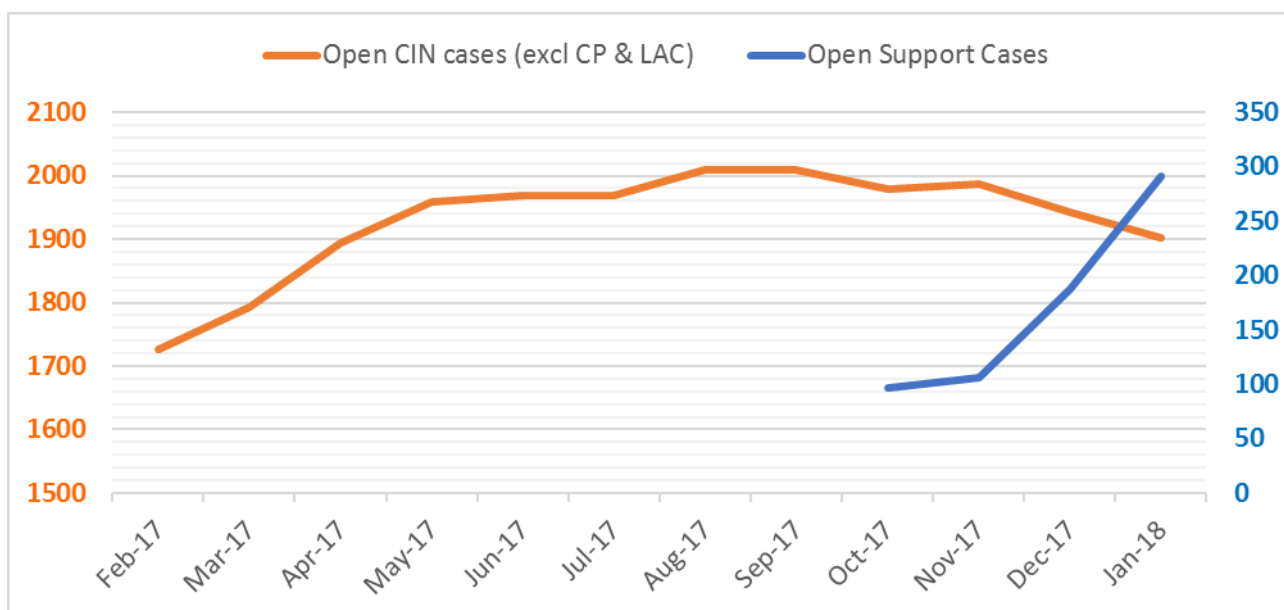
Training, supervision and audit

15.　Development and launch of the new service coincided with the development and launch of the new CARE Practice Framework and all staff have been able to access related training. In addition, consistency in supervision practice has occurred through the creation of an Assistant Team Manager post within teams which covers both Support and Social Work activity.

16.　Auditing continues as before with additional focus on support activity being built-in where appropriate. Audit and performance measures are being expanded to gain a clearer view across all functions within the service (not just support and social care functions). A CIN Step Down audit in December 2017, for example, identified the following improvements in practice:

- Primary outcomes achieved were improved family relationships and parent capacity, improved educational outcomes/attendance and health and development needs being met.
- Child's voice was stronger than findings from previous audit. Child's voice was weak/poor in 3 cases, compared to 13 cases in the previous audit.
- Proportion of CIN reviews held prior to step-down was strong – 91%
- Evidence of management oversight has consistently improved – now at 72%.
- Improvement in the quality of case recording.
- Lead Professional was identified 75% of the time - improvement.
- Recording rationale for step-down and clear authorisation comments - strong.
- CIN work was strong; including frequent contact with the family, consideration of needs of all family members and plans made for on-going support post step-down.
- Timing of the step-downs was appropriate.

Management oversight of performance

17.　Mechanisms for performance management remain and have been extended to cover Support activity. This includes fortnightly Performance and Outcomes Group Meetings (reviewing open cases and potential for drift by team), Stop the Clock sessions (reflective practice team sessions), Support and Safeguarding Managers Meetings (reviewing practice and performance themes across all teams and sharing best practice), Annual Service Reviews (including 6 monthly interim reviews by the teams) and a new overarching whole service Performance and Outcomes Board.

Feedback on service changes

18.　Creating better and more consistent methods for gaining regular feedback from children and families being supported by the new service are being discussed as part of a wider piece of work through the Families and Children's Transformation Programme. This will help us to evidence the distance travelled by a child/family, how they experienced our support and whether they feel we made a difference.

19.　Feedback from team managers has been sought and will help form the basis of any required ongoing development:

- MASH volumes not as high as predicted however there has been a shift in the nature of contacts.

- Ongoing review of support thresholds is helping to ensure the right families are receiving support at the right time.
- New Support and early help activity has provided opportunities for new learning and understanding.
- Senior Family Keyworkers benefiting from increased social work-based supervision; more focused, planned, structured, reflective and oversighted.
- Introduction of practice leads has been helpful.
- Feeling the benefit of being responsible for wider resources and being able to direct them to pick up activities with children/families – some of which would previously have had to have been resourced by social workers (given the absence of control over alternatives).
- Support-level work is non-statutory which allows for more flexible working with children and families.
- Ease of recruiting new Family Keyworkers has meant an influx of new staff bringing fresh ideas and approaches; very low vacancy rate.
- Staff making use of career progression opportunities which did not explicitly exist in the previous structure.
- Family Keyworkers and Social Workers co-working cases is working well – offering learning opportunities for both and ensuring continuity for the family.
- Family Keyworker casework is more focused and purposeful now packages are not based on patterns of fixed 6-month interventions.

Continuous development

20. The Families and Children's Service is committed to continuous development and truly integrated working and has embarked on an ambitious transformation programme with our partners to significantly improve outcomes for children and their families in Wiltshire. CSI Phase 2 has been replaced by this Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) programme.

21. The FACT Programme is multi-agency and has leads from the business leading workstreams and projects to deliver whole system change. A variety of FACT project activities will contribute to further improvement of the new service, ensuring it is perfectly placed to offer the best support to our vulnerable children and families – examples of these are:

- Creating an early support hub space alongside the MASH – to more effectively manage and direct incoming demand requiring earlier intervention and prevention.
- Refreshing threshold guidance – including creating a new accessible language and approach that is based on responding to needs rather than checking if a 'cliff-edge' threshold has been met.
- Introducing an integrated IT solution that will provide a holistic view of the child and their family, support good decision making and enable truly joined up working across internal teams and services and, potentially, with partner agencies. New IT will also release capacity to spend with children and families.
- Developing more robust, effective and consistent local pathways to enable safe, local responses to local needs (without the need to refer to the MASH).
- Further workforce development and training – including ensuring we have the right roles and functions across the system, the workforce is sufficient and staff are equipped and confident with common core skills and a share practice framework.

- Continuing to pursue co-location with partners where there is evidence this will deliver a better, quicker service to children and families.
- Developing effective mechanisms for co-production with children and families – not only hearing their voice but truly engaging them in service and practice design.
- Developing a partnership outcomes and performance framework which makes the important measurable rather than the measurable important - evidencing the difference we make for our children and families in Wiltshire, informing service development and contributing to a shared purpose across our partnerships.

Impact and Outcomes

22. As stated previously, given the nature of case work, six months since launch is too early to fully and confidently measure trends, impact and outcomes. In addition, further co-production with children and families will assist in identifying what is important to be measured and this, in turn, will further refine the partnership outcomes and performance framework being developed. A more detailed review of impact and outcomes will be undertaken as part of ongoing performance monitoring through the new Performance and Outcomes Board.

Safeguarding Considerations

23. The new service continues to deliver its statutory duties.

24. The new service is focussed on providing a more intensive response to families at an earlier point when needs arise in order to prevent them escalating into statutory services.

Public Health Implications

25. The new service supports the holistic identification of a child and family's needs and an integrated approach to supporting them to achieve positive change – this leads to improved health and wellbeing.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

26. None in addition to those reported on 14th March 2017.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

27. None in addition to those reported on 14th March 2017.

Risk Assessment

28. Risks that may arise if the proposed decision/related work is not taken

   None in addition to those reported on 14th March 2017.

29. Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

   None in addition to those reported on 14th March 2017.

Financial Implications

30.   None in addition to those reported on 14th March 2017.

Proposal

31.   The Committee is asked to note the progress made to date and recognise the commitment to the further development of performance and outcomes monitoring.

32.   For reasons noted in this report the Committee is asked to agree to a further progress update in six months' time (marking 12 months since launch of the new service).

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20th March 2018

Background Papers

None

Appendices

1. Service Aims and Desired Outcomes

Appendix 1

6.1 Service Aims and Desired Outcomes

6.1.1 Service aims:

- Prevent family breakdown
- Prevent escalation to level 3 services

The new service model will enable the authority to:
- Keep families together (prevent children coming into care)
- Ensure families are not put through unnecessary statutory processes
- Proactively identify, target and respond to child and family needs to prevent escalation to more intensive and intrusive services
- Deliver a truly integrated and holistic evidence-based service to children and young people within the context of their wider family and community environment
- Support the right children, young people and their families at the right time with the right provision to enable them to achieve good outcomes
- Discharge all statutory duties
- Ensure unborn babies, children and young people are kept safe from harm
- Deliver improved practice and outcomes leading to a reduction in domestic abuse, and improved support for young parents and engagement with fathers.
- Be assured of all upskilling and training requirements to enable staff to have the right skills mix and confidence to deliver the new service (SEN, education, parenting, behaviour)
- Ensure staff intervene rather than refer on to other services.
- Add value to the child's journey to adulthood; improve the child's journey (transitions and transfer points) and their experience of support
- Reduce the number of children becoming Child in Need, becoming the subject of a Child Protection Plan and/or becoming Looked After
- Grow and sustain a stable and secure Children's Services workforce

6.1.2 Desired outcomes:

What do our families want? (taken from Australian research – reference TASCI Family by Family programme)
- We feel as though we contribute to our community
- We trust other people outside of our family
- We connect to new places, people or services
- We feel less isolated in the community
- We ask for help when we need it
- We seek out new ideas and support for our family
- We see the impact of our decisions on others
- We get on better as a family
- We learn new things about our family
- Our family has new ideas for things to do together

- We say something nice when one of us does something good
- We feel more optimistic about the future
- We think about the future
- Our family set new family goals
- We take time to work on own goals and family goals
- We see what we're good at.
- We feel more confident in our abilities in general
- Each of us feels like an OK person
- We believe that our choices make a difference to things in our family

What do we want Operational Children's Services to feel like for our children, young people and families?
- There is one front door for me to use
- I understand who does what, what forms to fill in or what's going to happen next
- I have a consistent key person to help me to help myself.
- They know what works…
- …and how to work with me and my family
- They are my fiercest champion; and they challenge me too
- They listen and take action.

6.1.3 Translating that into outcomes:

- Children and families will know where to go for help and receive a more consistent response whichever door they use.
- Children and families will feel listened to and helped by local professionals they are familiar with.
- Children and young people are safe from harm (or the risk of it), are less vulnerable and develop strong emotional resilience and wellbeing.
- Children and young people's circumstances improve as a consequence of the help provided and their need for targeted and specialist services is lessened (or avoided in some cases).
- Children and families experience a seamless service (especially during transition across thresholds, services and during significant life events). The workers have the key skill set to work with the families to address the issues (unless specialist services are required)
- Children, young people and families say that our Children's Services have made a positive difference in their lives.
- Children and families feel motivated to change, are willing to engage and want to improve their circumstances for the future.