

**Report to Social Care Improvement Board 12/09/11**  
**Referral and Assessment**

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the board with regard to progress being made within the Referral & Assessment service.

2. Background

- 2.1 The two Referral & Assessment teams covering the North & East and South & West came together and went live on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011. The reason for the change was largely due to a lack of consistency across the teams in terms of performance. There were identified inconsistencies in terms of thresholds, timeliness, staff support and supervision and the approach of the management teams to manage the workloads of the team. The service is now led and managed by one Head of Service.
- 2.2 The R&A service, now based in Devizes, is managed by a single Team Manager and a team of five Assistant team managers who in turn manage a team of 20 FTE Social Workers. There is a dedicated Business support team comprising a Locality Admin Team Leader and six business support staff who compliment the service.
- 2.3 The R&A service is split into two functions with Social Workers dedicated to the Referral aspects and the Assessment element of the service. This split has allowed for an improvement in timeliness and consistency of response across the county.

3. Current Situation

3.1 Unannounced Inspection

The R&A service was subject of an Unannounced Inspection on the 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> June 2011. The Inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising any child abuse and neglect. They identified areas of strength and areas of practice that met requirements, with some areas for development. The majority of areas for development identified in the previous Inspection had been addressed and they were impressed with progress made. There were no serious weaknesses requiring priority action. The Inspectors commended the Crisis Intervention Service for providing highly effective and responsive provision to children and young people who need support in the evenings and weekend to allow them to stay with their families and or in placement. They also cited the Host family Scheme as a strength; this service was developed in conjunction with the Housing department to offer emergency placements for young homeless people, and as a result, a high proportion of young people have had their longer term requirements fully met.

The Inspectors also found that the service met statutory guidance and was able to demonstrate:

1. Adherence to the statutory timescales, with assessments making good use of historical information and risk and protective factors
2. Prompt child protection conferences with good multi-agency involvement
3. A good response by emergency duty
4. Up to date case recording with improved quality since the last Inspection
5. Improved supervision and management oversight
6. Improved administrative support

7. Regular case auditing
8. A robust Social Care Improvement Board
9. Progress in the use of the Common Assessment Framework

Wiltshire Council has developed an Unannounced Inspection Action Plan to address the areas for development, which is monitored both by the Social care Improvement Board and the LSCB.

Improvements are being made in the following key areas identified by Ofsted

1. Managers are ensuring that strategy discussions involve at least three agencies from health, education, police and social care and these will be audited regularly by the QA sub group of the LSCB.
2. The police child abuse and protection team ( CAIT) have strengthened their out of hours response providing senior cover 24/7 in response to issues raised by Ofsted; they did this with immediate effect.
3. The Referral and Assessment Service is continuing its improvement journey undertaking work with Professor Suzanne Regan and Professor David Thorpe to get the “ front door” right. The Team Manager is managing the streamlined referral and assessment service and noticeable improvements have already been made in the quality and timeliness of assessments.
4. Innovative service developments are underway to develop an integrated management and information sharing service “MASH” involving the police and other agencies to improve the service offered at point of referral.
5. Improvements are being made in multi agency understanding of thresholds with the introduction of a new multi-agency threshold document; this will be supported by further strengthening of the CAF and the provision of a step up and step down referral process to duty.
6. The quality of information in referrals received by the service will be improved by the review of the multi agency referral form. Further work will be under-taken to develop a consistent response by the Referral and Assessment Team and this will be audited and monitored by the Social Care Improvement Board.
7. All children will be seen as part of the assessment process and the manager will ensure that no assessment is signed off without the child being seen.
8. Support to newly qualified social workers will be enhanced. Managers will ensure that they have reduced caseloads, have fortnightly supervision, participate in the newly qualified development programme ( CWDC) and receive Joint Investigation training when required. All NQSW will receive child protection training before they are allocated child protection cases. Assistant team managers and senior social workers will mentor and coach as necessary and provide the opportunity for joint working on complex cases. Co-working will be established for newcomers to child protection.
9. Improvements will be made to address ethnicity and diversity issues by the further provision of equalities training and workshops, provision of reflective case audits and managerial oversight. Progress will be reported to the Social care Improvement Board on an annual basis.

10. The voice of the child and their family will be central to assessments undertaken. This focus will be strengthened by the provision of training, reflective case audits, managerial oversight and re-design of assessment forms.

#### 4. Team Workloads

4.1 When the service came together in June 2011 there were 1090 children open to both Referral & Assessment teams. This was broken down into 690 open to the South & West team and 400 in the North & East team. Under the leadership of the Team Manager all of the open cases from the South & West have been reviewed and risk assessed. Current workloads for the service are now 589 children. This review of the service workload means that Social Workers have manageable caseloads. Work is being consistently managed in a timely way both in terms of assessment, intervention and transfer of cases into Safeguarding and Looked after children's service. This means that children being worked with by the Referral & Assessment service are more effectively safeguarded which in turn promotes positive outcomes for children and young people.

#### 5. Supervision

5.1 Prior to the amalgamation of the teams it was highlighted that there was an inconsistent approach to supervision and support for the Social Workers across both teams. Since becoming a single service all Social Workers are receiving at least monthly supervision. Newly Qualified Social Workers are receiving fortnightly supervision and are linked in with the NQSW programme. Appraisals are in place for all Social Workers. Frequency of supervision is monitored through a central countywide system and is overseen by the Service Director for Children & Families and Integrated Youth service.

#### 6. Performance

6.1 Since the creation of the two specialist Referral & Assessment teams in July 2010 performance across the teams was inconsistent. Since June 2011 there has been a significant improvement in timeliness of the R&A service responses relating to Initial and Core assessments. In both key areas timeliness has improved significantly. In 2010/11 the outturn in relation to Initial Assessments across Wiltshire was 58% which was below comparator authorities and national performance. As a result performance in these two key areas has been reported to the Social Care Improvement Board.

6.2 To date in the 10 weeks since the team went live the average weekly performance for the Referral & Assessment service in relation to Initial assessments is significantly improved, averaging 83.22% completed within 7 days and 91.76 % completed within 10 days. This is set against overall performance for Wiltshire of 79.7% of IA's completed within 7days and 85% completed within 10 days. The target for Wiltshire in 2011/12 is 75%, compared to statistical neighbours which is 65% and a national picture of 67.3%.

6.3 With regard to performance of completion of Core assessments the Referral & Assessment service is currently 83% completed within 35 working days. Overall in Wiltshire to date completion of Core assessments is 82.2% just below the target set. This is set against comparator completion rate of 66% and a national figure of 78%.

6.4 There is now a strong culture of performance within the Referral & Assessment service led by the Referral & Assessment service manager.

#### 7. Future Developments

7.1 We recognise that whilst considerable progress has been achieved in a short space of time, there is still work to be done to work towards an outstanding service. We are ambitious and seek to improve the quality of the service that we provide to the children, young people and their families in Wiltshire. There are three key strands of work which the R&A service will be engaged with over the next 12 months.

8. Front Door Service Developments

8.1 We have begun a programme of work with Dr Suzanne Regan who has worked with a number of local authorities to assist them in transforming their “front door” services. Dr Regan has undertaken considerable work with Dr David Thorpe who advocates the Scandinavian model of service delivery which promotes effective early intervention through signposting, and a multi agency approach to the intervention post assessment. Dr Regan visited Wiltshire and spent time analysing practice. This work will be continued through the autumn.

9. Development of a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

9.1 We are working with key partners across Wiltshire police, Health and Education colleagues to develop a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The proposed development of these key partners aims to promote effective early information sharing, joint risk management & contribute to effective decision making in relation to the need for intervention and assessment in families. An operational group comprising key partners led by Nigel Boulton of Nib consulting has been created. Nigel was instrumental in the inception and creation of the Devon MASH. The first meeting of the operational group to take forward the MASH developments in Wiltshire took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011. A business case will be presented to the Strategic Board in October 2011. This development will build on strong partnerships already in existence.

10. Unannounced Action Plan

10.1 The management team of the R& A service will be working to implement the Unannounced Action Plan in order to build upon the progress made to date and to further strengthen case planning and management.

11. Recommendations

11.1 For the Social Care Improvement Board to note the progress made and to continue to keep this key area of service under review to ensure that effective arrangements are in place across Wiltshire to safeguard children and young people.

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