

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**
 Date: **23 July 2010**
 By: **Director of Children's Services**
 Title of report: **Safeguarding Unit Report**
 Purpose of report: **To inform the Panel of the work and function of the Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Advisors and provide statistical information on National Performance Indicators for the year ending 31/3/10**

RECOMMENDATION: The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no financial implications. The report describes services that are already provided from within Children's Services' budgets

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The Child Protection Advisors (CPAs) and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have a statutory role in chairing all the Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews (Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, Adoption and Children's Act 2002). New statutory guidance was issued in March 2010 (IRO handbook) on Care Planning and Reviewing arrangements for looked after children alongside new Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations. The new "Working Together to Safeguard Children" was published in March 2010 and sets out how individuals and organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

3. The Service in East Sussex

Location and establishment of service

3.1 1 full time Safeguarding Manager and 9 full time CPAs/IRO's (who are all experienced managers) have an administrative base at St. Mark's House in Eastbourne. In addition there is 1 Education Safeguarding Manager and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for child protection.

Management of reviews

3.2 The statutory requirement for each child received into care is a review is carried out within 28 days and thereafter at 3 month and then 6 month intervals. However if there is any significant change of circumstances such as a change of care plan then the process recommences.

3.3 The statutory requirement for each child subject to a child protection plan is a review conference be held within 3 months of the Initial conference and then within 6 months.

3.4 The IRO or CPA chairs the meeting and makes decisions. If there are difficulties in achieving the protection or care plan or in producing good outcomes for children then the IRO/CPA will follow up with the relevant manager and any further concerns will be addressed within a formal dispute resolution process.

4. Overview of the work 2009-2010

Looked After Children

4.1 The total number of LAC as of 31/03/10 was 517, a 17% increase compared to 2009.

4.2 The number of LAC Reviews held within timescales was 91%, below the target of 95% but a slight increase compared with 2008/09. This fall in performance is directly related to the overall increase in numbers.

4.3 Participation of children in their LAC reviews was 94%, a significant increase from 80.2% in 2008/09.

4.4 The stability of placement (3 or more placement moves) was 8.8% as compared to 5.8% in 2008/09. Although this is still very good performance in terms of national performance, it may indicate a downward trend that needs to be kept under review.

4.5 The number of LAC children who were adopted or became subject to a Special Guardianship Order was 42. This is a significant increase from 22 in 2008/09 and indicates an improvement in permanency planning for children.

Child Protection

4.6 The total number of children subject to a child protection plan as at 31.03.10 was 542, a 13% increase compared to 2009.

4.7 The number of Child Protection Reviews held within timescales was 99.8% exceeding the target of 97%. This is of note in light of the significant increase in volume of children becoming looked after or subject to child protection plans.

4.8 The percentage of children becoming the subject of Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time was 17.4% as compared to 11.4% in 2008/09. This is high and is of concern (target 10<15%) and indicates continued high volume of referrals leading to child protection processes. There is a need for continued focus and review on the support plans needed after a child protection plan has ceased. An audit will be carried out to look at this in more detail.

4.9 The number of children subject to a child protection plan for 2 or more years was 9.4% as compared to 8.7% in 2008/09 (target <10%). This performance improved throughout the year and appears to be on a continued downward trend indicating improved planning.

Designated Child Protection Teachers

4.10 The percentage of schools that have a Designated Child Protection Teacher (DCPT) trained within the last two years is 97% (target <97%). The training is provided by the unit. The LADO also provides child protection training for governors.

4.11 The DCPT data base notes continuing improvement since last quarter in the overall increase in trained DCPTs. Refresher Designated Child Protection Teacher training was undertaken by 45 teachers (places offered to 51) and 22 new designated teachers were trained.

5. Key Challenges for the Service

5.1 The increased volume in both child protection and looked after children numbers has generated significant increased pressures for the workloads of CPAs and IROs which has also impacted on the ability to undertake the quality assurance and development parts of the role.

5.2 There are still greater increased responsibilities and expectations within the IRO handbook as follows;

- Greater emphasis is placed on the local authority to appoint an IRO at the point when a child becomes looked after for the first time
- Extension of the IRO's monitoring role to greater independent oversight of the child's interest
- Requirement of the IRO to speak to each child prior to a review to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings
- Reinforces the duty of the IRO to challenge poor practice by referral to CAFCASS.

5.3 There are increased requirements within the new Working Together 2010 for the CPAs. It contains proposals to tighten the timescales to convene initial child protection conferences following strategy discussions and extends the range and responsibility of professionals attending child protection conferences.

5.4 Continued implementation of the Integrated Children's System and introduction of the new recording documents for LAC children.

5.5 Due to Ofsted requirements of schools there was a threefold increase in demand for Whole School Child Protection training in 2009/10 compared with 2008/09. This had led to the local authority changing the way in which this is delivered and the safeguarding unit can no longer directly provide the training at this level. Instead assistance will be given to the Designated Teachers in developing a customised and personalised package for delivery in their individual school, by offering training for the trainers package to DCPTs and by maintaining an 'approved provider' list for those schools who prefer to use external trainers.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Safeguarding Unit continues to represent value for money and helps ensure good outcomes for looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan.

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Local Members: All

Background Documents: None