

JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2015/16

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (STARTING WELL AND DEVELOPING WELL)

CHAPTER: Safeguarding

TOPIC: Children's Social Care – Referrals / Assessments / Child in Need / Child Protection

Why is this important?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international agreement that protects the rights of children under the age of 18 years. The convention gives children and young people over 40 substantive rights that include:

- special protection measures and assistance
- access to services such as education and healthcare
- develop their personalities, abilities and talents to the fullest potential
- be informed about and participate in achieving their rights in an accessible and active manner

Further details can be found at <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

Children's legislation and local authority services must take account of these rights in relation to how services are developed and how they are applied.

The statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 brings together the responsibilities of the local authority and the key partner agencies in respect of their duties to safeguard and to promote the welfare of children in their area.

Further details can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

The guidance details each organisations responsibility to safeguard children under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and the duty on the local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board under Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 to scrutinise and challenge the local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area.

In addition the guidance outlines how local authorities must assess the needs of children in their area and provide 'Early Help' for children to promote their welfare (section 10 Children Act 2004). Where children are subject to abuse or at risk of abuse, the guidance provides details on how cases of child abuse

are investigated and how child protection conferences are managed.

Local authorities and their partners (who work with children), are required through legislation and statutory guidance to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The requirement on local authorities and their partners together with public concerns in respect of protecting children from abuse make safeguarding of children a priority area of responsibility.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined within statutory guidance (Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2015), as;

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Whilst the local authority has the lead role to co-ordinate services, safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with children and their families.

Everyone who works with children - including teachers, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, youth workers, police, Accident and Emergency staff, paediatricians, voluntary and community workers and social workers - has a responsibility for keeping them safe.

A number of high profile cases have been highlighted in the media during recent years; this has increased the workload of local authority children's services and placed increasing pressure on children's services to respond to high levels of public concern and high public expectations to identify and protect vulnerable children.

It is clear from experience and research that good multi agency practice is vital at all stages of safeguarding and child protection practice, including that early intervention (Early Help) for families is critical to improving outcomes for vulnerable children.

It is important that these key issues are priorities for local authorities and that resources are focused on these in order to better protect children from harm and to close the gap between children in need and their peers.

The Manchester Picture

Children in Need

A Child in Need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired,

without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015).

Manchester Children's Services serve a population of approximately 114,700 children aged 0-18yrs.

Within that population there are groups of children who are more vulnerable than their peers, these include:

- Children for who there are concerns about their development and wellbeing.
- Children who are at risk of being subject to abuse.
- Children who have been subject to abuse including sexual exploitation.
- Children who go missing from their home or from a care placement.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Privately fostered children.
- Children at risk of Forced Marriage
- Children at risk of Female Genital Mutilation

There were 4,758 Children in Need (CiN) in Manchester on 31st March 2015, a decrease of 7.7% from 5,155 a year before (this includes Looked After Children (LAC) and children with a child protection plan).

The rate of CiN at 31st March 2015 (415 per 10,000 children), is higher than the England average of 337 per 10,000 children but comparable to statistical neighbour* authorities (428).

*Manchester's Statistical Neighbours were Kingston Upon Hull, Southampton, Salford, Barking and Dagenham, Birmingham, Newcastle on Tyne, Greenwich, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Nottingham until 2014 – Coventry and Bristol have since been added and Kingston Upon Hull and Barking and Dagenham have been removed.

Referrals to Children's Social Care

During 2014/15 the rate of referrals in Manchester was 1,147 per 10,000 local children. This was higher than the 2015 statistical neighbour's average of 797 per 10,000 and higher than the England average of 548 per 10,000.

The rate of re-referrals was 31% in Manchester compared to 24% in England.

Manchester's children social workers undertook 8,220 assessments during 2014/15, completing 93% within 45 days. For timescale this performance is better than the England and Statistical neighbour averages (81.5% and 84.1% respectively), whilst Manchester's rate of assessments completed was higher at 717 per 10,000 of the child population than the statistical neighbour rate (644) and the national rate (475).

Child Protection

Children who are suspected of being subject to abuse and/or neglect are

referred to children's social care services and may become subject to a child protection conference and an individual child protection plan.

The rate is higher than the England (Eng) and Statistical neighbour group (SN), average.

On 31st March 2015 Manchester had a rate of 78.7 per 10,000 children. This compares to Eng and SN rates of 42.9 and 64.3 per 10,000 (2015).

During 2014/15 our performance for reviewing child protection plans on time was high at 95.7%, compared to England averages of 94% and Statistical Neighbour performance of 91.8%.

Manchester's performance in relation to Child Protection Plans lasting more than 2 years is an area of concern at 5.4%, indicating that action to protect some children is not being taken quickly enough. Statistical Neighbour's performance was 4.2% and the national figure is 3.7%.

Areas of concerns in child protection cases relate to parental mental health, substance misuse and domestic violence.

What would we like to achieve?

Manchester Children's Services are currently subject of an Improvement Notice, served by the Secretary for State for Education in September 2014, following an inadequate judgement from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). There is therefore, a specific Improvement Plan linked to our Improvement Board which outlines our priorities for service improvement.

Partners, including Social Care, Education, Health, Greater Manchester Police and Early Help, are now collaborating effectively in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which is the single point of contact for all safeguarding referrals.

The MASH has established links to the Early Help Hubs to ensure that smooth step up and down arrangements are in place, and social workers are located in the Early Help Hubs. This is to ensure social work oversight of Early Help triage arrangements to ensure any children referred to the Early Help Hubs where threshold for social work assessment is met are identified quickly, and passed through to the MASH for safeguarding referral. This approach is showing early signs of success in managing demand appropriately, ensuring support is offered at lower thresholds where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Children's Services operate a duty and assessment system within the three locality areas. Again these localities are linked to the Early Help Hubs to allow for smooth transition of cases as needs increase or decrease following intervention. As part of a current social work remodel the oversight of these

teams is being reviewed, with an intention to align decision making and managerial oversight within one service area for 'Contact, Referral and Assessment'.

Children's Services have 3 locality based Child in Need, Protection and Court teams who work with all children and families following assessment where ongoing social work intervention is required. These teams are aligned to the duty and assessment teams in each locality area.

Children's Services are engaged in a programme of reform linked to the Improvement Plan, and a new social work delivery model, Signs of Safety, will be embedded throughout 2016. This will introduce a new way of engaging with children and families through an asset, relationship, strengths based approach which will closely align to the approach of Early Help Hubs and wider Public Sector Reform. The aim is to focus on a child and families assets, resulting in better engagement that should reduce child protection and LAC numbers through modelling a different approach.

Children's Services also plan to strengthen child protection social work practice in the city through targeted Section 47 (child protection inquiry) training and supervision training for managers.

A further area of growth links to the high number of newly qualified social workers in the City. Children's Services plan to offer an enhanced training programme to these staff to ensure they are highly skilled and equipped to deliver effective social work to the most vulnerable children and families in the City. This will support increased retention rates of children's social workers, a key priority for the year.

What do we need to do to achieve this?

A number of commissioning intentions are in place to support children's safeguarding arrangements in the City.

- The MASH arrangements will continue
- Commission specialist training 'Signs of Safety' – a 2 year programme to embed a new model of children's social work in the city
- Engage with Manchester Metropolitan University for their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme for newly qualified social workers
- Section 47 training
- Supervision training for managers and practice leaders.
- Review Children in Need cases to ensure they are being appropriately managed, including cases open to the Family in Need Service (FINS), part of Manchester's Early Help offer.
- Review those cases where a child has become the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time
- Gain an insight into domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and

parental mental health

- Ensure that the good multi agency partnership working that is in place to support the early identification of child sexual exploitation continues
- Increase the capacity of the Missing from Home interview service
- Commission an Appropriate Adult Service to support young people in custody

What are we currently doing?

Manchester Safeguarding Children's Board (MSCB) oversees safeguarding arrangements across the partnership playing a key role, alongside the Improvement Board, in driving up practice standards.

We are delivering actions from the Improvement Plan which outlines the priorities for service improvement.

References and Links

Working Together to Safeguard Children, Department for Education 2015
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Manchester Multi Agency Levels of Need, Manchester Safeguarding Children's Board 2015
<http://www.manchesterscb.org.uk/mscb-neglect-strategy-n-436>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

Other JSNA Topics that this links to

- Families at Risk incorporating Early Help
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Looked after children
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- Smoking, Alcohol and Drug Use
- Domestic violence

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