

Agenda Item 18.

TITLE	Children's Social Care Annual Review
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 21 July 2015
WARD:	None specific
DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Director of Children's Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Annual Review is a process used within Children's Social Care to work together as teams and departments in order to scrutinise the intelligence available. This enables Children's Social Care to formulate clear actions from a sound evidence base. Ultimately the benefits to the community are that Children's Social Care remains a department that is self-aware, that values peer support and challenge, and embrace service improvement. Subsequently the process of the annual review aims to lead to improved outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

RECOMMENDATION

Given the nature of the report, and the range of evidence used to triangulate data there are numerous recommendations for the year ahead. These are separated within the report for each team/area of the department. The actions will be monitored as part of the ongoing quality assurance and improvement cycle.

The overall recommendations are as follows;

1. Deliver on the Early Help and Innovation Programme through partnerships
2. Continue with the system wide implementation of the Practice Framework and deliver training where necessary
3. Review and re-design the quality assurance processes
4. Continue to implement and develop the Recruitment and Retention Strategy
5. Consistently apply reflective supervision and group supervision on complex cases
6. Consider how we can use the experience of our service users to help with service redesign
7. Maintain progress towards recruiting permanent members of staff who can be developed to deliver a consistent service. Aim for 100% permanent staff and evidence of retention
8. To inform wider service design for children aged 8+
9. Ensure the take up of the four planks of training, peer to peer, and action learning training is fully maximised
10. A review of the use of section 20 in light of recent court judgements

That the areas for development identified within this report are monitored on a quarterly basis by the Quality Assurance Manager so that updates inform next year's annual review/QA Annual Report. Areas for development will be actively worked on by Senior Managers and their teams

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report summarises some of the successes and challenges within Children's Social Care. Whilst it recognises there are areas that require improvement, there is also a vast evidence base suggesting Children's Social Care effectively safeguard the welfare of vulnerable children.

Background

A review of Children’s Social Care takes place on an annual basis. Carrying out the review involved a team of officers and managers from both Children’s Social Care and Strategic Commissioning. This annual piece of work enables the department to summarise the areas of strength and good practice, whilst also developing a focus for the year ahead.

Analysis of Issues

Wokingham caseloads remain low. This is encouraging and demonstrates the Departments commitment to resourcing good quality work with families. Although the complexity of cases determines the capacity of workers, caseload numbers remain a good indicator of a workforce with a manageable workload.

There have been a number of areas of improvement and development in different service areas which is encouraging. Any changes made remain subject of continuous monitoring and future developments identified will be acted upon over the coming year.

Staffing has remained a challenge for Wokingham which reflects a national issue. Locally this is even more challenging due to the set-up of a number of unitary authorities, all of whom are actively recruiting qualified social work staff. We have been successful to secure employment of social workers from overseas and newly qualified workers from the UK. Our current position is that vacancies remain covered by agency workers and our ongoing priority is to reduce reliance on agency workers. Positively, we have seen the turnover rate improve significantly from 33% in 13/14 to 14% at March 2015.

The implementation of the Practice Framework is going well. Additional training has been provided. There is still some way to go until it is fully embedded, but this is not to be unexpected. To successfully embed this model takes time as it involves planned and facilitated practice and culture change. This review has identified pockets of excellence in Wokingham. Children and young people are involved in the strategic developments within the local authority whether that be through formal routes such as the Children in Care Council, or through more innovative projects such as the introduction of Young Commissioners. The review has identified there is a commitment to ‘do things differently’ but likewise to deliver the best possible service.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)			
Next Financial Year			

(Year 2)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

Contact	Service
Telephone No	Email
Date	Version No.