

Sandwell Children's Trust

Quarter 1 Performance Report 2022

There continue to be significant issues in recruiting and retaining social workers. Some authorities are offering significant financial incentives, such as 'golden hellos' and retention bonuses, to recruit staff. In addition to this, private social work agencies are 'contacting...social workers, hoovering them up and then selling them back to us at twice the cost.'¹. The Council has agreed a market supplement for all case holding social workers of £2,500 but it is not yet clear if this will be enough to reduce the number of vacancies.

Several local authorities are recruiting social workers via project teams, which allows them to offer rates of pay well above those detailed in the regional Memorandum of Understanding. Coupled to the increased cost of agency staff there are also concerns on the capability of workers being offered by agencies, as some of these social workers are newly qualified and have minimal practice experience.

The total number of children in care, as of June 2022, is 848. This is a slight increase against the March 2022 position when 844 children were in care. The target for March 2023 is 796.

The rate per 10,000 of children in care in June 2022 is 102.2. The rate of children on a child protection plan has fallen since March 2022, from 49.3 to 45.5. Quarterly data from the region has been delayed we are therefore unable to compare performance at the end of June with our five regional statistical neighbours, however at the end of March 2022 Sandwell was performing well:

¹ President's address to ADCS annual conference, 7th July 2022

	March 2022
Sandwell rate per 10,000	101.7
Statistical Neighbour average (5 Authorities)	102.6

The KPI's that are red as of June 2022 can be directly linked to staffing issues. There are currently a high number of unallocated cases however SCT has a robust process in place to ensure children waiting to be allocated a social worker are safe, with daily meetings to assess risk and visits from duty social workers where required. Regular assurance is sought, and provided, on the actions SCT is taking to improve recruitment and retention while children are safeguarded.

The DCS meets with the Chief executive of the Trust on a weekly basis and is kept apprised of the situation regarding unallocated cases and of any other emerging issues.

		Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr - 22	May - 22	June - 22
PI.No	DESCRIPTION OF KPI															
1	Percentage of contacts to MASH referral timeliness	85.2%	96.0%	92.0%	83.4%	77.2%	83.3%	72.3%	80.7%	71.3%	78.7%	75.0%	81.9%	78.1%	77.6%	74.9%
2	Rate of Children on a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 CYP population	57.4	54.5	51.5	52.2	50.3	47.7	45.3	45.2	48.7	47.6	51.6	49.3	46.5	46.3	45.5
3	Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) in 15 working days	92.9%	84.8%	73.5%	89.8%	78.3%	88.6%	68.2%	93.5%	77.3%	87.8%	94.0%	59.5%	33.3%	84.0%	59.1%
4	Out of the total number of open Single Assessments, the percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days	85.00%	88.90%	76.30%	90.00%	80.20%	72.30%	71.00%	82.60%	78.50%	59.70%	56.50%	69.40%	67.40%	68.30%	68.10%
5	Number of Children in need, including LAC & Children on Child Protection plan who have been unallocated for longer than five working days	41.0	100.0	26.0	65.0	57.0	27.0	0.0	3.0	17.0	4.0	57.0	20.0	0.0	112.0	258.0
6a	Percentage of young people with Child Protection Plans where 4 weekly visits have taken place	89.00%	93.10%	86.10%	91.40%	87.50%	87.30%	93.10%	92.30%	91.30%	85.80%	88.20%	84.60%	80.10%	74.00%	74.10%
7	% CP Plans in place and completed within six monthly intervals	90.50%	89.50%	90.50%	87.40%	88.00%	90.80%	93.10%	90.40%	99.30%	97.00%	98.40%	100.00%	99.70%	97.90%	98.70%
8	Percentage of 4 weekly supervisions on Child Protection cases	62.40%	43.70%	67.50%	77.20%	56.10%	65.40%	71.50%	85.30%	61.10%	47.80%	62.80%	60.60%	74.60%	69.80%	63.00%
9	% of Missing children return interviews within 72 hours	96.8%	83.30%	90.6%	97.1%	87.5%	84.8%	81.6%	80.9%	80.6%	81.8%	87.2%	100.0%	84.4%	81.3%	76.5%
10	% Children in Need Visited in the last 20 working days	74.9%	63.4%	61.6%	63.8%	65.5%	65.8%	64.7%	69.2%	63.3%	57.6%	52.7%	60.4%	57.8%	61.1%	57.4%

11	Percentage Looked After Children visited in timescale according to statutory requirements.	77.4%	77.4%	81.7%	80.5%	82.4%	85.3%	84.6%	86.8%	85.7%	83.1%	80.1%	86.1%	86.4%	89.2%	80.4%
12	% LAC reviews within timescales -	97.7%	98.0%	97.6%	97.6%	96.9%	94.0%	91.1%	91.5%	87.9%	87.0%	86.4%	89.0%	93.6%	93.6%	91.8%
13	Vacancy rate of social workers	39.20%	38.8%	37.90%	36.90%	36.90%	35.90%	37.20%	36.20%	36.50%	36.10%	37.90%	39.64%	42.30%	43.60%	45.05%
14	Average overall caseloads across Children's Services	22.39	21.80	19.14	17.94	15.39	14.93	17.00	17.36	18.19	19.74	20.63	21.07	20.94	20.85	19.61
15	Number of random monthly case file audits rated RI and above	100.0%	100.0%	87.5%	93.8%	92.9%	85.7%	88.2%	90.9%	81.8%	80.0%	100.0%	81.8%	77.8%	100.0%	100.0%

Finances

The 2022/23 financial performance is being measured against the agreed 2022/23 Contract Sum as approved by Cabinet in February 2022.

SCT will be seeking to achieve a surplus of £1.9m in 2022/23 as per the plan to repay the deficit from 2018/19 by the end of 2023/24. There continue to be financial pressures relating to the cost of placements. Like staffing, this is a nationally recognised issue, with significant concern about provider profiteering. The care review makes some recommendations to address this however it is unlikely that we will see the impact of any changes this financial year.

SCT has set up a 'resource demand panel' that will be reviewing existing placements, and their cost, and seek to ensure that children are entering care appropriately and to the correct type of placement based on their needs.

SCT reached a negotiated settlement in 2021/22 with West Birmingham and Black Country Clinical Commissioning Group in respect of funding health care needs for several complex young people in residential care. This process has commenced for 2022/23, however is an area of risk until funding agreements are confirmed.

Contractual Matters

There is a requirement in the Service Delivery Contract (SDC) to undertake a contract review after four years of operation. The review will be presented to cabinet on 28th Sept, following which a recommendation will be made to the Secretary of State on whether the available Break Clause should be utilised.

SCT will attend Children and Education Scrutiny Panel in Sept 2022 to provide a performance update, this is in line with the contractual requirement for them to do so.

An inspection was undertaken by Ofsted, in line with the framework and guidance for inspecting local authority services for children (ILACS), in May 2022, with the report published on 5th July. A judgement of 'requires improvement to be good' was achieved. SCT will an action plan taking into account the findings from Ofsted and the existing improvement plan, this will be shared with the Council.