

Performance

There has been an improvement in performance against the KPI's since the last quarter, with 10 out of the 15 KPI's now green. While there continues to be significant issues in recruiting and retaining social workers, the Trust has been working to ensure that no child remains unallocated for longer than 5 days. They were able to bring this figure down to zero in September.

The Trust has three interim project teams in place to help alleviate the pressure linked to recruitment and retention funded by the LA. It is expected that as the staffing situation stabilises these teams will be exited from the service. Three cohorts of AYSE's have joined the Trust (there are 57 AYSE's as of Sept 2022) and while they hold a smaller case load than fully qualified social workers, their introduction will help to ensure children are not left unallocated, as the short term project teams are exited, and that the timeliness of assessments improves.

The total number of children in care, as of Sept 2022, is 818. This is a significant reduction 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 Sept 2022 is 98.6, this is a significant improvement against the rate in March 2022, 101.7. Quarterly comparator data for September is not yet available however at the end of quarter 1 (June 2022) Sandwell was performing well against WM statistical neighbours, with some work still required to match the whole statistical neighbour average.

	July 2022
Sandwell Rate per 10,000	102.17
Statistical Neighbour average (5 WM Authorities)	103.93
Statistical Neighbour average (all 10 comparators)	96.57

The general trend across statistical neighbours for the last 12 months has been an increase in the rate of children in care. It rose from 95.67 to 96.57, whereas in Sandwell the rate has fallen, from 104.83 to 102.17.

		Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr - 22	May - 22	June - 22	Jul-22	Aug-22	S
PI.No	DESCRIPTION OF KPI															
1	Percentage of contacts to MASH referral timeliness	83.4%	77.2%	83.3%	72.3%	80.7%	71.3%	78.7%	75.0%	81.9%	78.1%	77.6%	74.9%	67.5%	73.2%	81.9%
2	Rate of Children on a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 CYP population	52.2	50.3	47.7	45.3	45.2	48.7	47.6	51.6	49.3	46.5	46.3	45.5	48.8	50.5	48.6
3	Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) in 15 working days	89.8%	78.3%	88.6%	68.2%	93.5%	77.3%	87.8%	94.0%	59.5%	33.3%	84.0%	59.1%	81.5%	72.0%	52.6%
4	Out of the total number of open Single Assessments, the percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days	90.00%	80.20%	72.30%	71.00%	82.60%	78.50%	59.70%	56.50%	69.40%	67.40%	68.30%	68.10%	62.30%	60.40%	66.90%
5	Number of Children in need, including LAC & Children on Child Protection plan who have been unallocated for longer than five working days	65.0	57.0	27.0	0.0	3.0	17.0	4.0	57.0	20.0	0.0	112.0	258.0	215.0	0.0	0.0
6a	Percentage of young people with Child Protection Plans where 4 weekly visits have taken place	91.40%	87.50%	87.30%	93.10%	92.30%	91.30%	85.80%	88.20%	84.60%	80.10%	74.00%	74.10%	66.70%	75.40%	82.38%
7	% CP Plans in place and completed within six monthly intervals	87.40%	88.00%	90.80%	93.10%	90.40%	99.30%	97.00%	98.40%	100.00%	99.70%	97.90%	98.70%	99.80%	97.60%	94.30%
8	Percentage of 4 weekly supervisions on Child Protection cases	77.20%	56.10%	65.40%	71.50%	85.30%	61.10%	47.80%	62.80%	60.60%	74.60%	69.80%	63.00%	67.70%	77.30%	83.10%
9	% of Missing children return interviews within 72 hours	97.1%	87.5%	84.8%	81.6%	80.9%	80.6%	81.8%	87.2%	100.0%	84.4%	81.3%	76.5%	75.6%	81.1%	91.8%

10	% Children in Need Visited in the last 20 working days	63.8%	65.5%	65.8%	64.7%	69.2%	63.3%	57.6%	52.7%	60.4%	57.8%	61.1%	57.4%	42.8%	57.3%	80.3%
11	Percentage Looked After Children visited in timescale according to statutory requirements.	80.5%	82.4%	85.3%	84.6%	86.8%	85.7%	83.1%	80.1%	86.1%	86.4%	89.2%	80.4%	84.7%	87.3%	86.4%
12	% LAC reviews within timescales -	97.6%	96.9%	94.0%	91.1%	91.5%	87.9%	87.0%	86.4%	89.0%	93.6%	93.6%	91.8%	90.5%	87.0%	86.6%
13	Vacancy rate of social workers	36.90%	36.90%	35.90%	37.20%	36.20%	36.50%	36.10%	37.90%	39.64%	42.30%	43.60%	45.05%	45.05%	44.02%	37.80%
14	Average overall caseloads across Children's Services	17.94	15.39	14.93	17.00	17.36	18.19	19.74	20.63	21.07	20.94	20.85	19.61	18.64	18.51	16.52
15	Number of random monthly case file audits rated RI and above	93.8%	92.9%	85.7%	88.2%	90.9%	81.8%	80.0%	100.0%	81.8%	77.8%	100.0%	100.0%	83.3%	N/A	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.

The expectation of SCT was to achieve a surplus of £1.9m in 2022/23, however they are experiencing pressures from exceptionally high cost placements due to a combination of factors; including a difficulty in identifying suitable placements, an increase in the number of children with complex needs and a substantial increase in the weekly cost of placements compared with assumptions made in the 2021 MTFP. It is now expected that the deficit from earlier years will not be reduced. The high cost of placements, as well as recruitment and retention issues, mean they are forecasting an overspend, against the MTFP, of £570k as at the end of Quarter 2 in addition to not being able to meet the savings target.

The Trust has also recruited additional interim project teams funded by the LA, these are a relatively new phenomenon and are at enhanced rates, to fulfil the statutory requirements of the service and to mitigate the difficulties in recruitment and retention of permanent staff. It is estimated that this will cost £750k for the year, however this is subject to review between Council and Trust. The funding of this additional cost is, in part, offset slightly by a saving of approx. £250k in the costs of paying market supplements due to vacant posts (the payments of market supplements was agreed by Cabinet in March 2022, in addition to the base contract sum). It was agreed by Cabinet on the 28th September to fund these additional costs to ensure the Trust can continue to meet statutory responsibilities. The Council maintains a risk reserve for SCT and it is proposed to use a combination of Social Care Grant and the reserve to offset these additional costs.

The Council and SCT have discussed the current financial position and options to take corrective action. The Trust already has a savings target of £2.3m to achieve in 2022/23, with some risks around the ability to fully deliver the savings in relation to placements. SCT are considering a range of ways to source and retain social workers and have developed a Workforce Strategy to

take this approach forward. The Trust has also commissioned external support to undertake a review of the Trust's Workforce Strategy and approach to recruitment and retention.

A number of non-operational vacancies are being frozen and in year savings targets for the remainder of the organisation have been increased to partly compensate for increased operational costs.

The Trust also has a Transformation Programme in place which is currently focussing on a review of Edge of Care services, with the objective of improving service delivery so that families are supported early enough and with the appropriate level of intervention to prevent the need for expensive statutory intervention, and a reorganisation of the Front Door to improve the application of thresholds and reduce the number of inappropriate referrals that waste time and resources whilst still managing safe-guarding risks effectively. The transformation programme is addition to the 'invest to save' activity already being funded by the Council.

The annual Contract Sum agreement with Sandwell Children's Trust provides for the Council to fund the cost of the pay award each year. As this was estimated at 2% when the Contract Sum was agreed, in line with the Council's assumption in its own budget, the Council will need to fund the actual costs once 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 was presented to Cabinet on 28th September and Cabinet agreed that:

- i) they do not recommend to the Secretary of State that the break clause is invoked
- ii) authorise the Director of Children and Education, in consultation with the Chief Executive of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Children and Education, to agree with Sandwell Children's Trust revised contractual key performance indicators, to commence on 1st April 2023
- iii) the requirement to achieve a judgement of 'Good' as per the ILACS framework be revised from within four years of contract commencement (March 2022) to the next standard ILACS inspection by Ofsted (within three years of the previous inspection).

As per the process laid out in the Service Delivery Contract the Contract Review will be presented to the Operational Performance Board and the Strategic Partnership Board, following which, the reviews will be sent to the Secretary of State with an agreed recommendation in respect of the break clause.

SCT attended Children and Education Scrutiny Panel on 10 October 2022 to provide a performance update, this is a contractual requirement twice per year.