

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 1 March 2017	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Position Statement on Child Protection Plan Increases	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes the position statement on the increase in the number of child protection plans detailed in paragraphs 4 and 5 of this report.
2. That the committee notes the verbal update on January and February 2017 figures that will be provided at the committee.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The number of child protection plans in Southwark has continued to rise over the previous 6 months with rates at December 2016 of 53 per 10,000, compared to 44 and 43 respectively for statistical neighbours and England in 2014-15.
4. Analysis of the features and causes for this increase were carried out by the local authority and reported to the Southwark safeguarding children board executive in December 2016. This position statement sets out the changes in the trends of the number of child protection plans in Southwark and provides reasons why the figures are rising for the corporate parenting committee to consider.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The 2015-16 end of year figures for the number of children with a child protection plan was 289, by the end of September 2016 this had risen to 344, roughly increasing by 10 children a month over the previous 6 months. The following features were identified:
 - The biggest increase has been seen in those aged 10-15 years of age (20% increase over the last three years; 30% increase over the last 12 months)
 - Children with mixed and/or multiple ethnicity has increased by 60% over three years up from 52 children to 85 in 2014 and 2016 snapshots
 - With regards to the category of abuse, in line with the local agreement to reduce the use of the category of 'multiple abuse' this now accounts for 8% of child protection plans, from 19% in 2014. There is an increase in 'emotional abuse' and 'neglect' categories up 26% and 20% respectively

over the three year period, with increases likely to correlate to the reduction in use of the 'multiple abuse' category, and small falls in the number of 'physical abuse' and 'sexual abuse' categories.

- A slight increase in children staying on child protection plans for longer (up from 1% to 5% on a plan for two years or more against England average of 2.3% and 3.8% for statistical neighbours) with the rate of children going on to plans higher than those coming off a plan. (The 2015-16 deregistration rate was 52, year to date is 43).
 - Significant increases in repeat child protection plans up to 20% for year to date compared to 2015-16 outturn of 9% against the England average of 17% and 15% for statistical neighbours.
6. A review of the child protection plans over the previous six months to December 2016 identified a number of reasons contributing to this outcome, rather than one single reason. These included:
- Increased use of child protection plans for adolescents at risk, especially in regard to child sexual exploitation and youth violence
 - Renewed use of child protection plans for children also subject to public law outline (PLO) following a review of PLO processes and practice that identified drift in some areas of this work
 - Increases in re-registrations (child protection plans for a second and subsequent time):
 - where children on child protection plans were stepped down early to 'children in need' category or 'early help' and arrangements could have been stronger to better support maintained change and/or practitioners were over optimistic.
 - A number of applications for court proceedings for care have resulted in courts not agreeing, resulting in supervision orders and/or Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and subsequently children being placed on child protection plans for a second or subsequent time.

Actions being taken

7. This area remains one of ongoing review and scrutiny by managers, although numbers are currently lower than peaks earlier in the year. Cases are regularly reviewed by services as well as subject to external scrutiny and challenge through key forums such as the permanency taskforce, legal and challenge and support panels.
8. A key priority for the revised early help arrangements, as well as Safeguarding services has been the review and reconfiguration of local step down processes. A new, more robust processes has been put in place, that includes a team around the child meeting for every child that is stepped down, underpinned by a clear plan.

Community impact statement

9. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities.

10. The aim of the child protection plan is to:
- ensure the child is safe from harm and prevent him or her from suffering further harm
 - promote the child's health and development; and
 - support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, provided it is in the best interests of the child.
(Working Together to Safeguard Children: statutory guidance 2015, page 45)
11. The child protection plan will also take into account the child's wishes and feelings and would be explained and agreed with the child as far as is possible in view of the child's age.
12. The work of the referral and assessment teams, child protection case conferences and child protection plans detail the ways in which children and young people are to be kept safe. The child protection plan will be a part of the of the child's care plan when they are also looked after.

Resource implications

13. There are no specific resource implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Working together to safeguard children: statutory guidance on interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, 2015	Department for Education website	Department for Education website
<p>Link: (copy and paste into browser) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf</p>		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families	
Report Author	Elaine Allegretti, Assistant Director, Quality and Performance	
Version	Final	
Dated	20 February 2017	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	20 February 2017	