



<b>Paper No. SET/29/21</b>	
	<b>Tick One ✓</b>
For discussion	
For approval	✓
For information/noting	

**Date of Trust Board Meeting:** 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021  
**Confidential or Public Agenda:** Public

**Agenda item:**

Annual Delegated Statutory  
Functions and Corporate  
Parenting Report, 2020-21

**1.0**

Annual Delegated Statutory Functions & Corporate Parenting Report 2020/21.  
The report is presented for consideration for approval by Trust Board.

**2.0 Background information**

This is an annual report on the discharge of delegated statutory functions in respect of services undertaken by the social work and social care workforce within the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (the Trust) covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

The scheme provides an overarching assurance framework for the discharge of statutory social care functions. The scheme requires the Trust to produce a biannual report addressing how it has discharged those statutory functions pertaining to social care issues.

**3.0 Brief summary of key points contained in the paper/s**

During this reporting period the Executive Director of Social Work is reporting reasonable compliance with delegated statutory functions. The Trust has experienced a number of challenges in relation to the discharge of statutory functions, within the context of the covid-19 pandemic. All issues are presented in detail in the body of the report. Some of the on-going challenges in relation to the provision of care across social care and social work are as follows;

**Mental Capacity Act (2019)**

The discharge of the delegated statutory function associated with the MCA has been challenging across all directorates. This has presented a number of issues of concern in relation to the expansion of the ASW role and the implementation of deprivation of liberty safeguards. These have been further exacerbated by covid-19. Access to sessions with medical staff to complete Form 6 continues to impact on the Trust's ability to complete legacy deprivation of liberty decisions. There is a plan in place across adult services to achieve compliance with this legislation by May 2021. This timeline remains under consideration due to the difficult environment caused by covid-19.

## **Children's services**

### **Referrals for children referred for an assessment of need**

There has been an increase in the numbers of children referred for an assessment of need (614) in this reporting period, from 1335 on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 to 1949 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. It is suggested the increase can be attributed to easing of lockdown restrictions in the first half of this reporting period. More recently there has been an increase in families seeking support for children and young people who are experiencing emotional wellbeing concerns. To ensure the needs of children at risk continued to be met throughout covid-19 the Trust introduced early help initiatives in partnership with the community and voluntary groups to ensure provision of supportive services.

### **Unallocated cases**

In children's services there were 287 cases unallocated over 20 working days at the end of this reporting period. This includes the unallocated cases from children's disability services.

In April /May 2020 the Trust revised its counting of unallocated to take account of unattended cases. This made the Trust compliant with the regional definition resulting in an increase in unallocated cases. During covid-19 home visits to family support cases were paused unless the risk assessment indicated otherwise. This also impacted on cases remaining unallocated. The Trust has ensured that systems are in place to ensure data accuracy and a new unallocated tracker has been implemented. A Trust unallocated project board meets bi monthly with 5 working groups progressing different elements of the project.

### **Foster care provision for children in care**

During this reporting period the number of children in the care of the Trust has increased by 12 children, from 627 to 639. The Trust continues to experience on-going reliance on independent sector placements. There are a total of 97 children who are looked after in independent fostering.

### **Placement provision for children in care**

The Trust has 6 young people placed in private residential services. This is an increase of 2 from the last reporting period. The Trust also provides voluntary residential support to another 3 young people. Accordingly the Trust has 9 young people supported outside statutory provision. This continues to place considerable fiscal challenges on the Trust. The Trust notes the complex needs of some children requiring placements, which impacts on capacity to enable placement choice.

The Trust continues to experience challenges in resourcing an appropriate range of suitable placements. This is reflected in the experience of other Trusts across the region. The Trust is continuing to explore alternative placement options to meet the needs of children and young people.

### **Kinship assessments/ unregulated placements**

The continued increase in demand for kinship placements has been an influencing factor on the number of unregulated placements within the Trust. The Trust has 145 kinship foster care households. Seventy four of these placements are children where placements have not been approved within 12 weeks. This is an increase of 7 unregulated placements within this reporting period. The Trust continues to work to reduce the level of unregulated placements. The Trust has developed enhanced governance arrangements to ensure rigorous oversight of all unregulated placements and continues to ensure information with regard to same is reported to the Health and Social Care Board.

### **Mental health hospital admissions for young people under the age of 18**

There has been a notable increase in the number of young people requiring approved social work services and admission to mental health inpatient service in the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021; from 6 to 14 young people. This is reflective of the overall trend in assessment for hospital admission across mental health services (increase from 265 to 285). This is potentially related to covid-19 and the implications of lockdown on well-being.

### **Leaving care**

There continues to be significant challenges faced by the leaving care service in relation to accommodation, mental health, drugs and alcohol misuse. The Trust notes that at the end of this reporting period 35 young people are awaiting allocation of a personal advisor. Of the 35 young people who require a personal advisor 7 are young people with a disability who receive additional supports through children's disability services. 3 young people have chosen not to have a personal advisor and this decision remains under review. Of the remaining young people support is currently provided through children and family teams and intensive support teams. Transfer to leaving care and aftercare remains on the agenda. The Trust acknowledges this is impacted by workforce retention in children and family services.

### **Children and young people with a disability**

The demand for service provision for children with disabilities continues to rise. During this reporting period restructuring has taken place to enhance the service to children with a disability. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 there were 189 unallocated cases across the children's disability service. An additional 69 children and families were referred to the children's disability team for support in this reporting period. A band 7 senior social work practitioner for unallocated cases was appointed in March 2021 to support the reduction in unallocated cases in this service.

The Trust had the highest number of children with a disability accessing short breaks across the region, in the reporting period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, accounting for nearly 50% of service provision. The Trust notes an increase in the number of children cared for outside their family home (4) in this reporting period. This has resulted in short break services for young people with disabilities changing their statement of purpose to short-term residential provision. The decrease in service provision as a result of this, as well as the impact of covid-19 on support has resulted in an increased number of complaints about service provision. The availability of placements features on the Children's Directorate risk register.

During this reporting period a number of Judicial Reviews have been on-going in relation to the pressures within children's disability services, with specific reference to Lindsay House. Four of these have been concluded and 2 of these which began in 2019 highlighted how the Trust had been unable to fulfil its duty to accommodate children with complex needs. There are four on-going case actions relating to support packages and short-breaks. In addition the department of legal services (DLS) have alerted the Trust that 2 pre-action letters have been received from families in regard to lack of provision for short-breaks for children with disability during the covid-19 pandemic though these may not result in a full Judicial Review being held. Due to the pressures on the service the HSCB and RQIA worked with the Trust to enable timely introduction of a new service in Greenhill YMCA to facilitate short breaks.

Short-breaks are now available as restrictions relating to social distancing have been reduced. The Trust has also responded to the decreased capacity within short break provision by creating bespoke short break services to meet this need and additional outreach support from Trust staff.

The Trust reports a significant decrease in carers assessments for parents/ carers of children with a disability in this reporting period, from 101 to 17. There continue to be significant challenges in discharging this statutory function due to staff numbers and an increase in working with children and young people in need of safeguarding. There are currently 35 referrals for carers assessment that are not allocated. To address the decrease of carers assessment completed in this reporting period the Trust will undertake an audit of carers assessment and will seek permission from DoH to pilot the carers conversation wheel with parents/ carers of children with a disability.

The Trust continues to ensure that children with disabilities and their families have access to self-directed support, in accordance with assessed need.

### **Adult mental health services**

The Trust has seen a growth in referrals for mental health services from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021; from 2235 to 2865. This is reflected in the number of people commencing a social work service as this has increased from 480 to 573. The Trust continues to ensure the discharge of statutory functions and service improvement within this landscape. Of note is the significant improvement in frequency of supervision rates from 40% to 79%. Mental health services also report an increase in the number of carers assessments completed and carers receiving support, which has been crucial during covid-19.

During this reporting period the mental health directorate continues to experience workforce pressures in the provision of a seamless approved social work (ASW) service. This has occurred due to the demographic of the workforce population. The Trust is working regionally on an ASW workforce plan. As noted above there has been an increase in ASW assessments from 265 to 285.

## **Adult disability services**

### **Muckamore Abbey Hospital**

The closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital to admissions continues to have a significant impact on mental health services in providing in-patient beds for those with a severe learning disability. Within the reporting period, 2 service users were inappropriately placed on a mental health ward due to the lack of provision for inpatient care and treatment.

Regional agreement that those with a mild learning disability can access mainstream inpatient care and treatment has been reached.

The assessment and treatment model is being progressed regionally and led by the HSCB. Work has also been progressed with mental health colleagues to improve pathways for adults with a learning disability who require inpatient care.

The HSCB is leading on regional contingency planning and this is progressing well.

The Trust continues to work hard to ensure the safety of adults with a learning disability who require mental health support. The resettlement programme is prioritised and the Trust has successfully resettled/discharged two further patients within the reporting period.

The Trust responded when the Minister requested learning disability nursing support from all Trusts into Muckamore Abbey Hospital. Contingency arrangements were put in place and the Trust provided 2 wte staff.

## **Primary care and older people**

The Trust acknowledges the key role of primary care and older people's services in supporting nursing homes and vulnerable older people throughout the covid-19 crisis.

### **Domiciliary care services**

The domiciliary care waiting list currently has 164 people awaiting a service. The Trust has extended the commissioning of block contracts with several independent sector providers in order to increase capacity. The unmet need list is reviewed weekly by locality managers. The Trust has established a Trust wide domiciliary care group to ensure oversight/ prioritisation of need across all programmes of care. The Trust is fully recruited to budget level (630 staff), an increase of 100 staff over previous 2 years.

## **Workforce arrangements for both the professional leadership of delegated statutory functions and the operational delivery of the service**

The EDSW has ensured that those managers who are responsible for the professional leadership of delegated statutory functions and the operational delivery of the service are professionally qualified social workers.

A professionally qualified social worker is employed at Director and/or Assistant Director level in all of the directorates undertaking statutory functions. This ensures accountability arrangements are clear and unambiguous.

Social work leads from across the Trust programmes of care and the ADSW meet regularly with representatives from HSCB to review the action plan agreed as part of the annual review of the provision of delegated statutory functions and corporate parenting for 2020/21.

The implementation of the MCA during this reporting period has increased demands on social work caseloads.

There are ongoing issues for the Trust in the recruitment and retention of social workers within children's services.

Work continues both within the Trust and at a regional level to address issues relating to recruitment and retention in social work.

The report reflects the detail of all actions taken across programmes of care to mitigate against challenges and to support the workforce in the delivery of the service and ensuring delegated statutory functions are met.

**4.0 Recommendation/s for the Trust Board (please state if the paper/s is for information/noting or for approval by Board members)**

For approval

**Lead Director:** Barbara Campbell

**Designation:** Director of Children's Service and Executive Director of Social Work

**Date:** May 2021