



Paper No. SET/72 /2021	
	Tick One ✓
For discussion	
For approval	✓
For noting	

Date of Trust Board Meeting: 24th November 2021

Confidential or Public Agenda: Public
Agenda item: Interval Delegated Statutory Functions & Corporate Parenting Report, November 2021

1.0 Introduction

Interval Delegated Statutory Functions & Corporate Parenting Report 2021
The report is presented for consideration for approval by Trust Board.

2.0 Background information

This is an interval report on the discharge of delegated statutory functions in respect of services undertaken by the social work & social care workforce within the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (The Trust) covering the period 1st April 2021 to 30th September 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.

This report provides assurance and analysis of the Trust's provision of delegated statutory functions across social care services. This report comprises of an executive summary and the interim corporate parenting report (CC302). The interval report is following a reduced format as requested by the Health and Social Care Board. The Trust is reporting that it is satisfied that delegated statutory function requirements have achieved reasonable compliance within the context of responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

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. Some of the ongoing challenges in relation to the provision of care across social care and social work are as follows;

Workforce

The Trust continues to experience significant gaps in workforce, with vacancies across all programmes of care for band 5/6 social workers. Additionally, there is

difficulty with recruitment in band 7 team leader posts, particularly in children's services. This is exacerbated by the impact of covid-19 on staff absence. The Trust is working pro-actively, at a regional level, to address the vacancy situation. Recruitment and retention of social workers remains a top priority and is detailed on the corporate risk register. Locally the Trust has established a workforce hub to support the development of creative solutions to staffing gaps, particularly within social care posts.

Children's services

Children referred for an assessment of need

There were 1892 children in need referrals within this reporting period. This is a decrease of 57 from the last reporting period 30th March 2021 (1949). This may be attributed to a return to pre covid-19 referral pattern although further information is required as we move forward to ascertain this.

Unallocated cases

The number of cases awaiting allocation to social work remains a significant challenge in children's services. At the 30th September 2021 260 families (346 children) were unallocated. This incorporates children and family teams, gateway teams and children's disability services. This is a reduction of 27 from the last reporting period. The children's disability service has the highest percentage of unallocated cases, currently 139 families (152 children). The Trust recognises the need to ensure a timely response to children in need referrals and continues to lead on internal improvement initiatives to ensure the needs of children are met at the earliest point.

Foster care provision for children in care

During this reporting period the number of children in the care of the Trust has decreased by 1 child/ young person. The Trust acknowledges an on-going reliance on the use of independent sector placements over a period of time. There are currently a total of 98 children who are looked after in independent fostering. This has remained static since the last reporting period. This continues to place considerable fiscal challenges on the Trust. The Trust is actively recruiting foster carers to reduce reliance on the independent sector (see comments in section 10.5.5 of CC302).

Placement provision for children in care

The number of children waiting for an appropriate placement within the Trust has remained stable at 22 (with a reduction of 2 children with disabilities). The Trust continues to experience challenges in resourcing an appropriate range of suitable placements, particularly in a covid-19 environment. This is also impacted by increased complex behavioural needs of young people who require specialist provision.

The Trust acknowledges that 11 sibling groups have not been placed together during this reporting period due to a lack of placement capacity within the fostering system.

The Trust recognises the need to ensure appropriate placement provision for children in need of care. The Trust has developed a temporary senior management post to assist in placement finding for children with complex needs and is working with independent partners to explore increased opportunities for placements.

Kinship assessments/ unregulated placements

The demand for kinship placements has been an influencing factor on the number of unregulated placements within the Trust. The Trust has 25 placements that have not been approved within 12 weeks and who are in the process of being assessed as kinship carers; this is a decrease from 74 at 31st March 2021. The Trust continues to attempt to reduce the level of unregulated placements, whilst acknowledging that significant progress has been made and continues to implement enhanced governance arrangements to ensure rigorous oversight. The Trust has raised the need to review the current regional kinship procedures through the children's services improvement board.

Statutory visits for children who are looked after

The Trust ensured that 3967 statutory visits to children who are looked after took place between 1st April 2021 and 30th September 2021. 11 of these were outside statutory timescales. This is a decrease of 46, from 57 visits being outside timescale in the last reporting period. The Trust continues to monitor and review any statutory visits that are not completed within timescale.

Reviews for children who are looked after

The number of reviews taking place outside statutory timescales has remained static within this reporting period; from 65 reviews reported 30th March 2021 to 64 reviews reported 30th September 2021. This is kept closely monitored and reasons recorded.

Children and young people with a disability

The demand for provision for children with disabilities remains high and the number of unallocated cases continues to be a significant concern for the service. A band 7 senior social work practitioner and two band 4 support workers have been in post since April 2021 to support reducing the number of unallocated cases. The significant number of outstanding UNOCINI family support assessments remains one of the services greatest challenges. The Trust is leading improvement initiatives to explore the provision of a more

timely service. As part of this improvement focus, service users and carers have been engaged in the co-design of a strategic plan for children with disabilities in the Trust.

The Trust is pleased to note there has been a significant increase in carers assessments being completed within this reporting period (74).

Short break provision has remained at a reduced level throughout the reporting period. Prior to covid-19 Lindsay House had the capacity for twenty-eight overnight short breaks per week. Due to covid-19 restrictions it is reduced to seven per week, a 75% reduction. Beechfield Respite Unit has changed to a temporary short-term unit for four young people and therefore cannot provide short breaks. The Trust has developed a temporary short break arrangement using Greenhill YMCA Chalet and has introduced an outreach service which has proven absolutely essential for families who have not been able to access the same frequency of short breaks. An evaluation of these services is currently being undertaken.

The 16+ population continues to increase steadily, with 9 new young people during this reporting period; increasing from 136 to 145. This has implications for future planning with regard to transitions to adult services and the completion of deprivation of liberty under the Mental Capacity Act (2019). The increase in numbers of young people with a disability requiring transitions support demonstrates a year on year trend in this area of service provision.

Early years

Early years services have been working to reduce the numbers of overdue inspections. Overdue inspections, as a result of covid-19, are currently being completed on average rate of 46 per month. To date 282 of 516 overdue inspections have been completed. Inspection completion is being monitored on a monthly basis and the Trust is on target for completion of all overdue inspections (from the period 1.03.20 - 31.03.21) by 31st December 2021. This is in line with the DOH agreed target for completion of these overdue inspections by 31 March 2022.

Adult Services

Adult mental health services

Adult mental health services have seen an increase in demand within this reporting period and continue to experience workforce pressures in the recruitment of social work staff and the number of approved social workers (ASW). There has been a 13% increase in requests for mental health services. The Trust ASW strategy is being progressed and regional consideration is being given to exploring the potential of increased training places for ASW. Mental health services report full compliance with the Mental Capacity Act (2019).

Adult learning disability services

Within this reporting period adult learning disability services have achieved 100% compliance with the Mental Capacity Act (2019), however a significant number of cases await completion of the Form 6 by the medical practitioner. Social work continues to liaise with medical colleagues in relation to the medical role within the MCA process, including collaborating with the GP federation. This work is on-going.

Muckamore Abbey Hospital being closed to admissions continues to present significant challenges in providing appropriate support to people with a learning disability who present with mental health issues. A draft pathway between learning disability services and mental health services has been agreed and planning to operationalize is taking place.

The Trust acknowledges difficulties in the provision of day care/ short breaks services within the covid-19 environment and the resulting reduced capacity for adults with learning disabilities and their families. It is acknowledged that this is further impacted by workforce recruitment and retention, particularly with social care staff.

Primary care and older people

Within this reporting period primary care and older people have continued to discharge their statutory functions within a very challenging environment that has been significantly impacted by covid-19. There are on-going issues with regard to recruitment of social work staff leading to gaps in the workforce, particularly within hospital social work. This is reflected across the region.

Social care services continue to experience increased demand, with increased unmet need evident. The unmet need list is reviewed weekly by locality managers.

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: Ms Barbara Campbell
Designation: Director of Childrens Services, Quality Improvement & Executive Director of Social Work
Date: 24th November 2021

Cover Sheet for Trust Board _Nov 2021