

Health and Wellbeing Board
10 November 2016
Children's Trust Briefing

This paper outlines the activity of the Children's Trust since the last update which was provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2016. The Trust has met twice since the last update.

After reaching the end of the first year of a new Children's Plan and considering how effective it had been, members held a workshop in July to review the Trust's role and purpose. In September members agreed a number of recommendations about the future shape of the partnership based on these discussions and identified three priority areas of work to take forward – this is presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board as a separate item on the agenda.

Also in September the Trust discussed and fed into the following areas:

1. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

The Trust endorsed the OSCB's 2015-16 Annual Report and noted the areas of work being overseen by the Board.

2. Multi-agency response to increase in demand across the system

The Trust received an update on progress with the actions it had accepted responsibility for in the OSCB impact assessment of increased activity across the child protection system:

Members noted that workforce changes taking place in children's social care have impacted on progress with the actions to achieve greater collaboration in budget planning across agencies and to review service thresholds / the 'front door' across agencies. These actions will now be picked up as part of the transformation work, which is on track.

As part of work with the judiciary to manage workload more efficiently across agencies, members made suggestions about reducing time spent in court, e.g. adopting a similar approach to Health where expert witnesses can provide input via a video link.

The Housing Support Advisory Group reported a number of housing issues affecting vulnerable children to the Trust, including homelessness, overcrowding and substandard living conditions, and the impact of the benefit cap / removal of the spare room subsidy. Agencies are finding more families coming forward in rent arrears or struggling to find affordable accommodation because private landlords are reluctant to accept Housing Benefit. Further changes to the benefit cap in 2017 are likely to impact families and removal of Housing Benefit for 18-21 year olds may lead to higher youth homelessness.

Further updates will be provided to the Trust in March 2017.

3. The Children and Young People's Plan – performance for quarter 1

The Trust's main concern remains the increase in activity levels across the child protection system and how this is managed. Currently fewer children in Oxfordshire

are supported outside statutory services than elsewhere and more are supported within statutory services. This is contrary to the Trust's aim to help communities and individuals to help themselves, allowing them to be as independent as possible.

There are some 500 new referrals into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services each month, over 80% of which are accepted which means that waiting times for first appointments are much longer than they should be. Members' concerns about early intervention will be addressed and reported on as part of the Trust's new priority areas of work.

A new dataset, combined with the OSCB dataset, will be populated for the next Trust meeting in November and will form the basis of future performance reporting to the Children's Trust.

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