

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday 13 March 2014
2:00pm Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

Present:

Mrs J Chamberlin (Chairman)

Mr R Bearman
Mr D Collis
Ms E Corlett
Mr D Crawford
Mrs M Dewsbury
Mr C Foulger
Mr T Garrod
Mr P Gilmour

Mr B Hannah
Mr M Kiddle-Morris
Mrs J Leggett
Mr J Perkins
Mr M Sands
Mr E Seward
Mr R Smith
Miss J Virgo

Parent Governor Representatives:

Dr K Byrne

Church Representatives:

Mr A Mash

Non-Voting Cabinet Member:

Mr M Castle
Mr J Joyce

Education and Schools
Safeguarding

Non-Voting Co-opted Advisors:

Ms V Aldous
Mr A Robinson
Mrs C Smith

Primary Education
Norfolk Governor Network
Secondary Education

Also in attendance:

Mr N Shaw

1. Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Ms D Gihawi (Ms E Corlett substituting), Dr M Strong (Mr E Seward substituting), Mrs S Vertigan, Mrs H Bates, Dr L Poliakoff, and Ms T Humber.

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2014 were received and signed as an accurate record. It was **agreed** that a breakdown of the number of schools in each OFSTED category be provided in tabular format to Members on a monthly basis.

- 2.2 The Chairman gave the following update in relation to the minutes:
- Further briefing sessions had been well attended by Members both from the Panel, and from other panels.
- 3. Declarations of Interest**
- 3.1 Mrs Leggett declared an interest as a member of the management committee of Leeway, which was mentioned at various points within the agenda.
- 4. Items of Urgent Business**
- 4.1 There were no items of urgent business.
- 5. Public Question Time**
- 5.1 There were no public questions.
- 6. Local Member Issues/Member Questions**
- 6.1 There were no local member questions.
- 7. Cabinet Member Feedback**
- 7.1 Safeguarding**
- 7.1.1 The Cabinet Member for Safeguarding reported that on 28th February members of the Cabinet and others met at the Shirehall together with pupils from Burston Primary School, to learn about the Burston School Strike. Children were shown the minutes of the meeting which had taken place 100 years earlier, reporting that the teachers, Mr & Mrs Higdon, had been asked by the then Norfolk Education Committee to leave the school. The policy of Norfolk County Council now reflected that there should be a Good School for Every Norfolk Learner. The Improvement Plan had been submitted on 24th February and was available to all staff and Members on the Intranet. No official feedback had been received from the Department for Education. The Improvement Plan included strategic and operational plans for each area of improvement, and Members would receive an email detailing how these could be accessed. A series of briefings would be set up for Members.
- A Peer Review would be taking place in the week beginning 31st March 2014, undertaken by the Director of Children's Services at Essex County Council. This was designed to test the resilience of the Improvement Plan. The Department for Education would also be undertaking a Strategic Review. The Cabinet Member would send a note to all Members once the dates for these reviews were finalised. Looked After Children numbers were reducing however there was still a long way to go to reach the same levels as statistical neighbours.
- 7.2 Education and Schools**
- 7.2.1 The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools reported that improvement activity was proceeding well, with no significant issues to note. An Improvement Board meeting would be taking place the following week, with a new independent chairman.

Schools were engaging in the 'Raising Readers' paired reading scheme. £16M additional funding for 2015/16 onwards had been announced from the government in recognition of the challenges faced by small schools and rural areas. Norfolk had traditionally been £200 per pupil below the national average. The criteria for using this funding was not yet known, and the Council would be responsible for challenging schools to make the best use of this resource.

8. Children's Services Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report for 2013-2014

8.1 The annexed report (item 8) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report provided Members with an update on Children's Services performance and finance monitoring information for the 2013/14 financial year.

8.2 During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- A number of factors were involved in the need to help frontline management to improve, including increasing confidence in challenging underperformance; structured supervision of practitioners; and sharing of good practice. Management performance was not consistent and there was a need to achieve good and outstanding management across the department. There was also a lack of consistency in the management of thresholds, with a dialogue required to ensure a fair and equitable system.
- An Institute of Professional Excellence was being developed with the University of East Anglia to provide opportunities for newly qualified social workers. A public/private sector partnership was also being explored to allow some task and finish assessments to be passed to an outside agency. This formed part of the plans to reshape the future of social work in Norfolk. However, this partnership was in the early stages of formation, and a period of learning would inform future development. It was **agreed** that an update on this partnership would be provided in the next performance monitoring report.
- A recent analysis of performance in relation to adoption had been sent to a government minister, and a response received. It was **agreed** that the analysis and ministerial reply would be circulated to Members with the minutes (see Appendix 1).
- The variance of £400K under the disabilities joint protocol with Community Services related to a contribution to the care packages of adults who received some services from Community Services, and where they had a child in their home. This ensured that they had the means to look after the child, and prevented admissions into care.
- The School Balances figure was reliant on information being reported from schools, and also reflected a reduction as some had become academies. This figure would fluctuate as schools worked to the academic year rather than the financial year.
- The Early Years Services underspend related to staff vacancies, as well as funds held for training and sustainability strategies. A different approach was being developed which would result in better use of the funding

available.

- The proposed public/private partnership would ensure that the pathway, quality, and capacity of workloads was correctly balanced. This would in turn drive up performance.
- The introduction of free schools meals for Year R to Year 2 pupils had a short implementation period. Funding was available for capital development, however it was for governors to determine how this was spent. A report would be presented in early summer giving an update on implementation. It was recognised that this provided health and social advantages, however practicalities could prove challenging. It was important that pupils continued to be registered where they were eligible for free school meals, as this would affect the pupil premium as they progressed through the school system.
- It was confirmed that 39 child protection assessments had not been completed on time, and **agreed** that this would be clarified as a percentage of all assessments (see Appendix 1).
- The School Sickness Insurance Scheme was a mechanism that schools could buy into to help pay for sickness cover. The balance of this fund would fluctuate according to demand.
- There was a well-established correlation between the size of a school, and its performance. A critical mass of children was required for long term sustainability.
- The percentage of health checks undertaken fluctuated on a daily basis. A significant number of outstanding health checks related to out of county placements, where co-operation from other agencies was not forthcoming. A robust approach was being taken in tackling this.
- Social care scorecards were being updated and would be presented at the next Panel meeting. A workshop would be taking place to brief Members on the dashboard of indicators.
- The risk register had been updated and was being presented corporately. One additional risk had been added to the departmental risk register, relating to the corporate infrastructure required to support improvement.

8.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report and support the general direction of travel. The Chairman thanked officers for the work undertaken in a relatively short space of time.

9. Update on Quality Assurance Activity within Children's Social Care

9.1 The annexed report (item 9) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report summarised the findings of the case file audit of social work practice undertaken between November 2013 and January 2014.

9.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The improvement required in the 'step down process to universal services' related to the threshold of what constituted a referral. It was not possible to give a clear picture of how many unnecessary referrals were progressed to a social worker.
- The authorising of poor assessments to achieve a time standard was linked to the issues around quality of frontline management. Managers were being advised to send back assessments until they reached the required standard, which could be at the expense of timeliness. Eventually, both quality and timeliness would be achieved.
- Concern was expressed at the variance of audit grading by departmental division. Senior managers received overlays of performance information across all areas of the department, and worked towards best practice at practitioner and manager level. Some audit staff had been co-located in teams to offer support and advice.

9.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report and endorse the amended audit approach and programme.

10. **Scrutiny Working Group: Pathway Planning for Care Leavers**

10.1 The annexed report (item 10) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report set out the conclusion and recommendations of the working group. The Chairman of the Working Group thanked Members who had participated in the working group, as well as members of the In Care Council who had contributed to the scrutiny.

10.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- One team was now reporting 100% compliance, and cross-county performance was now between 50%-60%.
- The Interim Director added her thanks to Members for undertaking this scrutiny, commenting that this would feed into the reshaping of services. She noted that an action plan would be presented to Members which would address the recommendations outlined.
- The scrutiny report would be presented to the Improvement Board at their next meeting.

10.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to endorse the recommendations of the report and **agreed** to receive an action plan from the Interim Director of Children's Services in relation to those recommendations.

11. **Admission Arrangements for September 2015**

11.1 The annexed report (item 11) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report summarised responses to the statutory annual admission consultation; recommended co-ordination arrangements and timetables for the statutory admission rounds; and recommended changes to primary school catchment areas in the Downham Market area.

11.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- A further 14 responses had been received since the papers had been published, which were broadly similar to those already received.
- A meeting had taken place at Wereham to discuss the capacity issues. Concern had been expressed that younger siblings may be placed in a different school, however transitional arrangements would be made. It was noted that capacity at the high school would need to be considered in due course. The broad consensus was that, provided Stoke Ferry had capacity and transitional arrangements were put in place, the proposals were supported.
- The co-ordination scheme related to the administration arrangements for the admissions process across all schools in Norfolk. This followed a legal scheme that Norfolk County Council had statutory responsibility for.
- Chaotic households were described as those in areas of high social deprivation who struggled with the administrative process of entering their child for a preferred school. Information was shared with schools, children's centres and early years providers to support parents and make the process more accessible. There were around 6% of households identified as having children due to start Year R in September 2015 that had not yet registered, however some of these may have moved out of the area. The Council continued to process applications for school admissions to ensure that all were resolved.

11.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

12. Sustaining high quality leadership in Norfolk Schools

12.1 The annexed report (item 12) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report set out a number of principles for consideration by governing bodies and the local authority in examining the sustainability of high quality education and leadership across the county.

12.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- It was suggested that the role of governors in the management of a school had not been emphasised enough in the report. It was noted that the report had focussed on overall school leadership, of which governors were of equal importance.
- A confidential assessment was made of each school in Norfolk, however the number of pupils in the school did not form part of any risk assessment at present. There was a recognised link between the size of a school and its likelihood of success. Intervention work was undertaken where required. Future assessments would include the size of a school as a factor.
- The Council would not want any schools to enter into a potentially unsuccessful federation or cluster arrangement. With the recognition that larger schools were more sustainable, the question of the model used to

achieve a larger entity was important. Examples of best practice in Devon had been studied. Federation presented opportunities to recruit the best leadership teams into a group of schools.

- The diocesan church representative noted that the diocese had a track record in achieving structural solutions by carefully examining the best solution for an individual school. The governor representative confirmed that Norfolk Governor Network had been engaged in developing this strategy, and had highlighted the importance of training for all governors. It was noted that there was a relatively small uptake of the right to reconstitute a governing body, which was a potential solution to the issue of governor recruitment.
- A review of all small schools had been undertaken in September 2013, and the council was supporting nine schools of concern. Governor services were closely engaged in giving both proactive and reactive advice.
- The strategy focussed on creating sustainable schools, and did not aim to make these into targets for academies. However some schools were attracted by the opportunities offered when considering becoming academies, and some were required to convert.
- It was **agreed** that the percentage of school governors that don't live within the catchment area of their school would be provided (see Appendix 1).
- It was confirmed that some of the schools with less than 50 pupils were federated, and **agreed** that the number would be reported in the minutes (see Appendix 1).
- The tendency for larger groupings of schools to succeed was replicated across the country. Examples from Devon, Lincolnshire and Cumbria were being studied.
- It was acknowledged that a co-operative model for groups of schools worked well when there was strength in the initial group. There were three successful examples of this model in Norfolk.

12.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the general direction of travel and welcomed the general principles and options for exploring structural solutions. It was **agreed** that an update report would be presented in four months.

13. Norfolk Youth Justice Plan 2014-15

13.1 The annexed report (item 13) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report outlined the Norfolk Youth Justice Plan 2014-15 which had been updated to outline new actions, risks and opportunities.

13.2 During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Previous performance reporting on the original case management system had been developed locally over time, however a new case management system had been purchased which would need to be further developed to provide more comprehensive performance reporting.

- CHAT (Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool) was a new national tool which was scheduled for implementation in early 2015 as part of a new national holistic assessment tool. It was expected that this would provide significant improvement in health assessment.
- The Ministry of Justice *Restorative Justice Action Plan* had been refreshed nationally as part of a drive to widen the voice of victims in the justice system. Funding to YOTs focussed on training of staff. NYOT was intending to maximise outcomes by working with partners including the Police and Crime Commissioner who had also received funding for this purpose.
- A future report on mental health would include information on restorative approaches.
- Locally, there were no known issues relating to cuts to legal aid and the impact on youth justice practice.
- All partners within the multi-agency Norfolk Youth Offending Team were supportive of secondment opportunities. There had recently been a specific issue relating to agreement of a secondment across services but this was not significant.
- Work to reduce first time offending was undertaken by the Police within their restorative approach. The Youth Offending Team targeted their work at young people at risk of becoming involved in offending or anti-social behaviour. This was firmly supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner. The number of first time offenders in Norfolk had reduced by around 70% in the last 7 years.
- Tackling reoffending was a key part of the work of NYOT, and there had been a decrease in the number of young people reoffending, including the seriousness and frequency of offences.
- Twenty looked after children were involved in offending behaviour in 2012/13.

13.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to commend the performance of the Youth Offending Team and **agreed** to recommend the Plan to Cabinet.

14. Children with Disabilities

14.1 The annexed report (item 14) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report provided an update on the work of the Children with Disabilities service including that relating to commissioning.

14.2 During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Global development delay referred to a number of factors which combined to affect development, and the ability to achieve.
- The report did not specifically focus on special educational needs, but was

concentrating on the wider health, social and wellbeing of a child both in the community and in the home.

- It was **agreed** that future reports on the subject would be presented at a level for readers who were not professionals within the subject matter. It was acknowledged that this was a complex area and a work in progress. There was a desire to extend the eligibility criteria, and extend the team which worked on this area.
- It was **agreed** that a Member briefing should be provided, highlighting the key things that Members needed to know and the implications of these proposals.

14.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** that the Interim Director should take forward the following under her delegated powers:

- the proposal for extending eligibility criteria for referral and assessment to the CWD service based on Disability and Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 definition of disability requiring policy change and CWD Statement of Purpose to be amended and updated.
- the proposal for increased resource to enable CWD based social workers to fulfil duty of assessing disabled children under section 17 of the Children's Act and provide support based on assessed needs.
- The strategic and commissioning approach based on the definition of disability described in the report, working with stakeholders and the need for joint commissioning arrangements with health services based on gap analysis identified through needs assessment.

15. **Child and Young Persons Teams response to Looked After Children Reduction Strategy**

15.1 The annexed report (item 15) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report detailed the strategy Children's Services was employing to reduce the current excessive numbers of looked after children. It was noted that Norfolk had not been in line with its statistical neighbours in relation to looked after children numbers for 16 years. The Interim Director welcomed the strategy and acknowledged that it would take time to produce results.

15.2 During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The Strategy focussed on challenge and reasoning around each looked after child, ensuring that no child was in care who shouldn't be, while ensuring that those who did need care were given this. Other services could be put in place to divert some children from care.
- The Virtual School in Norfolk was held up by the Department for Education as a national exemplar. This success needed to be built upon, including the best use of the looked after child pupil premium. It was anticipated that a proposal for governors and head teachers would be ready soon.
- The Corporate Parenting Board was a reinvigorated body which was co-

chaired by the Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and a member of the In Care Council. The agenda was driven by the In Care Council and engaged key partners. Panel members would be invited to a meeting of the Board in April.

- 15.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the critical nature of looked after children reduction and welcomed the clear, targeted strategy. They endorsed the actions taken and progress made in addressing this issue, and requested regular progress updates.

16. Early Help Offer

- 16.1 The annexed report (item 16) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report clarified the purpose of early help, detailed how this would be delivered, and noted how its effectiveness would be measured. It was noted that this report and the report at item 17 were interlinked, and the Chairman agreed to take comments on both items together (recorded at item 17).
- 16.2 The Panel **RESOLVED** to recommend to Cabinet the new direction of policy and strategy for implementation together with associated resource allocations set out in the report. It was **agreed** that a further update report covering both the Early Help Offer and the New Strategy for Early Years Services would be presented in the autumn.

17. New Strategy for Early Years Services

- 17.1 The annexed report (item 17) by the Interim Director of Children's Services was received. The report outlined the new strategic approach to the provision of services to children aged under five in Norfolk.
- 17.2 During the discussion the following points were raised:
- When assessing a pupil for a good level of development, there was a greater emphasis on three prime areas including communication and language, and physical, emotional and social development. This was based on a national framework of indicators, and assessments were carried out at the end of Year R.
 - A recent report from the Department for Education had suggested that OFSTED should be the sole arbiter of quality, and that the local authority had a role to support and challenge settings requiring improvement and inadequate.
 - Every setting would continue to have a named Development Workers who would visit every early years setting as part of their work in ensuring that there were sufficient places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds to access their funded entitlement, and Early Years Advisers would focus on raising educational attainment. Each Children's Centre would continue to receive information on the number of children in their area, so that appropriate provision of age placements would be in place. It was possible to target those eligible families that were not taking up the early help offer. It was **agreed** that further information on the performance of Children's Centres would be provided to the Panel.

- A campaign was underway to develop speaking and listening skills, which would assist with developmental opportunities. This dovetailed with the Raising Reading campaign, and a series of articles would be available highlighting opportunities to support children. It was hoped that this would encourage community interest.
- There was an awareness that some early help settings were vulnerable to problems in governance (for example management committees) however it was a key role of development workers to support these groups.
- The key criteria for eligibility for a free 2 year old place from September 2014 was the working tax credit. However in Norfolk this had already been introduced to maximise uptake. The deficit in provision of places as reported within paragraph 3.3.6 of the report was not correct, and had been improved in the main by the inclusion of child minders with an OFSTED rating of Good or above. Previously child minders were also required to have the Level 3 qualification to be included in the programme. There had been an 86% increase in the number of child minders offering early years places. However there were still a couple of hotspots with a deficit in provision.

17.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to recommend to Cabinet:

- The new Strategy for Early Years, which clearly sets out the need for the service to improve outcomes for all children at the end of the Foundation Stage based on the recommendations of the 0-5 Needs Analysis
- The budget savings of £2.67 million, which will be achieved by reductions in non-staffing budgets, particularly a refocusing of training which will deliver improved provision while saving £900,000 by using a support and challenge coaching model, absorption of early years staff into the service budgets for the Localities and Integration Teams, and identification of £1million of DSG funding to support the new focus on SEN.
- The implementation of the immediate re-focusing of the roles of the Early Years Adviser and Development Worker towards key improvement targets.

18. Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

18.1 The annexed report (item 18) by the Chairman was received. The report asked Members to consider a refreshed scrutiny forward work programme.

18.2 During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The meeting scheduled for 15th May was reserved for training in the new committee governance structure. Concern was expressed regarding the lack of member engagement between March and June, and it was **agreed** that an additional meeting would be scheduled for early May to deal with the business scheduled for the 15th May meeting.
- It was **agreed** that a recommendation would be made that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the committee that would take over the work of the

Panel would be members of the education and social care improvement boards.

- It was **agreed** that the items in the Panel's forward work programme should be recommended to the new committee.

18.3 The Panel **RESOLVED** to meet in early May and to recommend the work plan to the new committee with the following additions:

- May 2014 add:- action plan, outlining how each of the Scrutiny Working Group's recommendations will be taken forward (pathway planning for care leavers).
- July 2014 add:- free school meals; and Sustaining High Quality leadership in Norfolk Schools: progress update
- September 2014 add:- Children with Disabilities: progress update; and Response to LAC reduction strategy: progress update.
- November 2014 add:- Early Help Offer/New strategy for early years services: progress update
- January 2015 add:- Private fostering arrangements.

The meeting closed at 5.55pm.

CHAIRMAN



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Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Thursday 13th March 2014

Agenda Item Number/ Minute Number	Report Title	Action	Response
8	Children's Services Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report for 2013-2014	Circulate analysis of adoption performance together with ministerial reply (to be attached to minutes)	See Appendix 2 of these minutes.
8	Children's Services Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report for 2013-2014	Provide confirmation of 39 child protection assessments not carried out, as a percentage.	Approximately 20% of child protection assessments have not been carried out.
12	Sustaining high quality leadership in Norfolk schools	Provide the percentage of school governors that don't live within the catchment area of their school.	Unfortunately we are unable to produce the data around where governors live in relation to the school they are a governor at. The system we have does not give us the facility to do this. Currently we encourage governors to come forward to not only serve their local school but to join a governing body based on their skills and what they can offer. Many governors choose to join a group outside of their local area or close to where they work or where a school offers more challenge.
12	Sustaining high quality leadership in Norfolk schools	Provide the number of schools with less than 50 pupils that are federated.	Of the schools with less than 50 pupils in the review, 17 are in federations and 6 are in a partnership.

Appendix 2



Children's Services
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
Norfolk NR1 2DL

NCC general enquiries: 0344 800 8020
Textphone: 0344 800 8011

Edward Timpson MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Children and Families
Sanctuary Buildings 20
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

Your Ref:
Date: 25 February 2014

My Ref: SL/cd
Tel No.: 01603 222600
Email: sheila.lock@norfolk.gov.uk

Dear Edward

Following your letter of 14 January 2014 in relation to the publication of the updated adoption scorecard, I felt it important to write to you to outline the success, challenges and dilemmas we face in Norfolk in relation to adoption.

I realise that you are very familiar with the complexities involved in Adoption and matching a child's needs to prospective adopters. We are acutely aware of the drive to have more children adopted where it is appropriate to do so, in a timelier manner.

Norfolk presents a mixed picture with regard to performance and timeliness. There are clearly areas where Norfolk performance is better than national and statistical averages and areas where it is worse. The decision made in March 2013 to focus on children who waited longest has impacted on performance data but represents improved outcomes for children, LAC reduction, and cost savings. The service has fully implemented the Adoption reform agenda in line with government timescales and all adoption applications since July have been processed within timescales.

We have examined 39 cases in detail where one or both of the key targets have not been met and have found that children with significant delay impact greatest on our 3 year average. In these cases 26 or 56% have been a result in delays in proceedings. Other key factors have delays in sibling separation (6 cases) assessing foster carers (7 cases). We are actively addressing all issues.

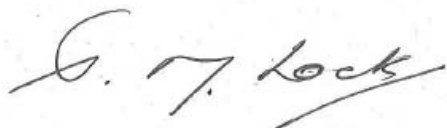


In Norfolk performance is improving **the in year data is significantly better then the 3 year average** and this is likely to continue improving, however the key performance indicators are reported as a three year average and take into account historical delays.

Recent reforms will only have an impact from July 2013 (Adoption Action Plan and new Public Law Outline) whilst the scorecard next year will be based on data from April 2011 to March 2014. Small numbers of children hard to place; and cohort of siblings can have a disproportionate impact.

The impact on the Adoption reform Grant is going to mean we have recruited a record number of adopters (69); increased the number of interagency matches by 7 to 24; matched 100 children in a year; and increased the number of adoption orders granted by 16 to 72. This achievements might well occur in a year where our scorecard position deteriorates, but I am sure like ourselves you wish us to be tenacious and child focused in searching for adopters for children with multiple needs and or developmental uncertainty.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'S. Lock', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sheila Lock
Interim Director Children's Services

Current performance

The national picture of 152 English authorities is, 36 are hitting both the government key targets *entering care to moving in with adopters* and *placement order to match*, 51 are hitting one and 69 are hitting neither. Norfolk is in the middle group achieving one of the key targets.

The Norfolk picture the positive headlines - productivity is increasing:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14 (projected)
Adopters approved	42	59	67 (increase of 8)
Adoption orders granted	59	56	72 (increase of 16)
Adoptions via other VAA or LA	16	17	24 (increase of 7)

In Norfolk, performance for the measure *children wait less than 20 months from entering care to moving in with their adopters* (68%) is better than the national average (55%) and statistical neighbour average (66%). Only 27% of approved adopters wait longer than 3 months to be matched in Norfolk as opposed to 60% for statistical neighbours and 50% for England average.

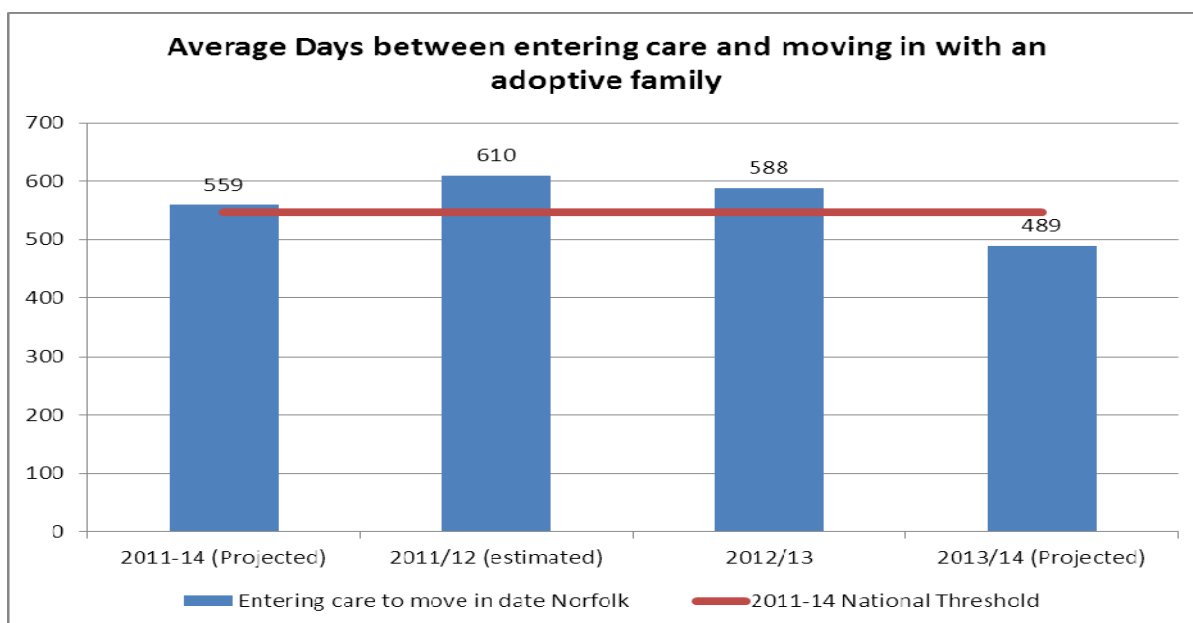
Performance is improving **the in year data is significantly better than the 3 year average** and this is likely to continue improving, however the key performance indicators are reported as a three year average and take into account historical delays. Challenging targets and reforms will only have an impact from July 2013 (Adoption Action Plan and new Public Law Outline) whilst the scorecard next year will be based on data from April 2011 to March 2014. Analysis of this data will be a key element of this paper. Small numbers of children hard to place; and cohort of siblings can have a disproportionate impact.

The Norfolk picture, the challenges - Norfolk is unlikely to achieve either key targets next year. In subsequent years Norfolk is expected to achieve one target the year after and both in 3 years time.

The Adoption Scorecard

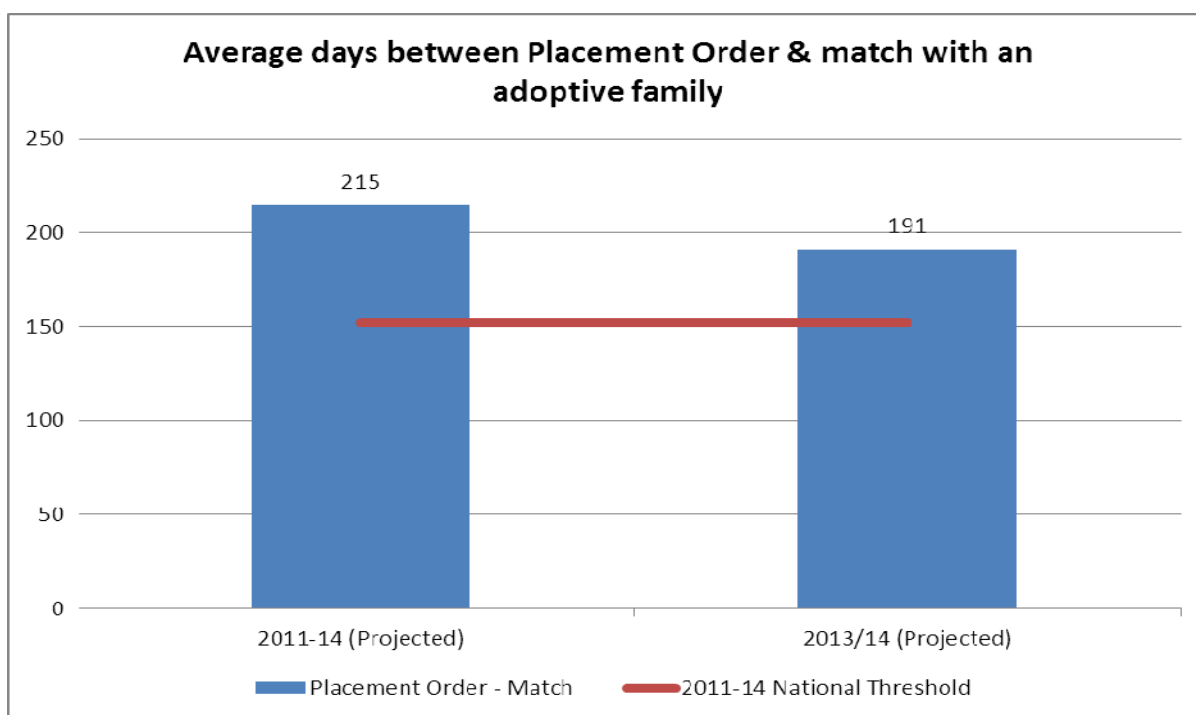
The key 2 performance indicators measure the days in the children's experience from entering care to moving in with their adopters, and from placement order to match. The next page provides further analysis on these measures;

Entering care to move in date



- The 3 year average figure for 2011-14 is projected to be 559 days against a threshold of 547; this is due to our 11/12 performance which is based on an assumption of 610 days (this is an educated assumption based on the three year average for 2010/13)
- In year figure is projected to be 489 days, which is better than the threshold for 2011-14 of 547 days
- Further analysis has identified that the 5 children with the highest number of days (average of 1069 days) then the in-year average would have been 445 days making the 3 year average 545 days (below the threshold of 547 days)
- We have assumed that 80 Adoption Orders will be granted in 14/15 (13/14 is projected to be 72) and based on this projection, we would need to achieve a target number of days of 410, to achieve the 2012-15 threshold of 487 days

PO to match date



- The 3 year average figure for 2011-14 is projected to be 215 against a threshold of 152
- In year figure is projected to be 191 days, still above the threshold for 2011-14
- The 12-15 thresholds of 121 days will not be achieved. Even if all AOG next year (assumed 80) were 0 days between PO and match, Norfolk would still have a 3 year average of 134 days

The above shows that whilst performance is improving the pace of improvement is not fast enough.

An examination of these cases show that 31% of the children where the targets were missed, it was only missed by 20 days. **Recommendation 1** is to increase use of CareFirst performance management to deliver the improvements required.

The most significant impact on performance is those children where there is the longest delay. From a cross section of 39 cases where significant delay occurred, the following themes emerged.

Length of proceedings and / or delays in starting proceedings. .

In 22 of the 39 cases (56%), delays in proceedings were the most significant factor, as evidenced in the Norgrave review and OFSTED survey of adoption agencies. Since the implementation of much stricter timescales following the Family Justice Review, this will diminish as an issue. However, careful monitoring of pre proceeding timescales will be necessary.

There is a possible new issue, as an increasing number of children with adoption plans are remaining at home during the care proceedings. Therefore they are only entering care at the point the Placement Order is being made. In these

cases there is bound to be delay post order, as the child needs to make the adjustment and have their needs outside the family home assessed.

Sibling separation

6 of the 39 cases involved delay either to separate siblings (4) or when a new sibling was born (2). The new PLO outline lays a greater emphasis on how realistic care plans are and this year the adoption service has filed reports, to advise the court on this issue. Due to the complex nature of sibling relationships decisions can only be made on a case by case basis, so the recommendation is to continue to monitor **(see recommendation 2)**.

Foster Carers Adopting

For 7(18%) Children, there were delays in assessing foster carers as adopters. In 2012/13 the service focused on timely assessment of other prospective adopters to increase the number of matches for children who did not have an identified possible family. Since 1 July 2013 and the investment of £150,000 by Norfolk County Council to increase staffing, there are no longer delays in processing foster care adoption. Therefore these are likely to be very positive cases for statistical returns. We are currently performing in line with the government timescales for fast tracking foster carers (four months)

It should be noted that these two areas accounted for 74% of the cases that did not meet the timescales. Both have now been addressed, which will have a positive impact going forward.

Supply and demand

This remains a national and local issue. The increase of children with a plan for adoption in Norfolk is larger than national trends. In year figures show that the number of children with a plan for adoption is currently 100, compared to 97 and 76 for the previous 2 years. The increase in prospective adopters is not keeping pace with the increase in demand for children waiting with complex needs. We have undertaken a major investment in adoption recruitment based on the Kindred research. Our campaign was featured on Look East and is now entering a targeted phase focusing on over 45's, gay and lesbian adopters, church goers and volunteers. We are currently running a radio campaign and have two 2 major events planned for church/ voluntary groups and gay and lesbian prospective adopters. The shortage of adopters and mismatch of adopters for the children who are waiting for adoption is a national issue.

Children with more complex needs

This co-hort has always been hard to match, and matches may take up to 2 years. The success of finding families for these children, are being penalised by the scorecard targets, which does not allow that some children will be harder to place than others. An increase in the number of younger babies with fewer complex needs has created greater pressures and whilst the Adoption Reform grant has mediated some of this pressure by focusing on this cohort, it will continue to be an issue.