

**Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE,
Interim Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	06 March 2020
Subject:	Referral from OSMB - Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan (Measure 24)

Summary:

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) on 28 November 2019, the Board considered a report on the Performance Reporting against the Council Business Plan 2019/20 - Quarter 2.

The Board raised concerns about the performance of Measure 24 "Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan", which had not achieved its target in Quarter 2.

It was agreed by the Board that the measure be referred back to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to explain why the number of children on a plan had increased, following the analytical work undertaken to understand the increase.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to

1. seek assurance on the performance of Measure 24 "Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan".
2. agree any comments to be passed to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Executive in relation to this measure.

1. Background

At the end of Quarter 2, there had been an increase in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan from 341 at the end of Quarter 1 to 400 at the end of Quarter 2, with no obvious reasons for the increase.

The increase was across all eight Family Assessment Support Teams (FAST), with the exception of North Kesteven.

It is worth noting that none of the teams had seen any significant changes in managers and so the same managers were in post making the decisions about whether a case should go to Child Protection in Quarter 2.

To understand the increase, there has been an analysis of the data and an in depth audit of some cases across the teams.

The focus of the audit were cases that had not been open for more than 20 days and cases that had become subject to a Child Protection Plan within 30 to 60 days of becoming Child in Need (CIN). This was to test out a hypothesis that some cases may be going to Child Protection too early before other interventions had been given time to support the family.

The key findings from the data analysis were:

- The number of children going on a plan is higher than the number of children coming off a plan as the children are remaining on a plan longer, hence the increase in numbers.
- The Performance team is predicting 423 de plans this year. The England comparator is nearly double this (if England was the same size as Lincolnshire, in 2018/19 they would have had 827 de plans).

This evidences that children are not going on a plan just for a short period of time, that is under 6 months. The analysis of the children who are going on a plan is that the issues and risks that they are experiencing and subject to, tend to be multiple rather than single issue. Therefore, the needs and risks for the cohort of children who are going on plans are complex and plans are being tried and tested before the children are coming off a plan.

One of the key factors in why social care are working with children and families with the most complex needs and risk is due to the strong early help offer, both internally in Children's Services and externally across partners and commissioned services. There are currently 2346 children who have a Team Around the Child (TAC) plan.

To ensure that there is no drift and delay, the Conference Chairs meet with the individual Team Managers and their Practice Supervisors on a regular basis to discuss all Child Protection cases that have been open a year, and to discuss the effectiveness of the Child Protection Plans.

Nine cases related to 43 children and therefore there has been an increase in the number of big sibling groups subject to a Child Protection Plan. This was also a finding of the audit.

Comparative to both our statistical neighbours and England our Child Protection numbers are still relatively low. The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan in our statistical neighbours in 2018/19 was 642 and the England figure was 636. In 2018/19 our figure was 303, less than half. The figure for December 2019 was 388.

Key findings from the audit were:

- In all cases children are seen promptly and statutory timescales are mostly adhered to.
- Children are safeguarded as a result of the action taken by Children's Social Care.
- Where insufficient progress is made, children are escalated to pre-proceedings or become looked after.
- The majority of the cases where there had been no early help related to children who had transferred in to Lincolnshire from another local authority where they were already the subject of a Child Protection Plan.
- In the group of cases where the children had previously been CIN for 31-60 days, almost all are from large sibling groups.
- Where there are large sibling groups, overcrowded and/or insanitary conditions, eviction, debt and the family are living with relatives, these are all going to have an exponential impact on other issues, compounding factors such as domestic abuse, alcohol misuse, non-attendance at school and so on, and making children more vulnerable to injuries and neglect.
- None of the children seen have previously been the subject of a Child Protection Plan in Lincolnshire, although most have had periods of involvement at different levels.
- There are a small minority of cases where CIN plans had been given insufficient time to be effective before children were made subject of a Child Protection Plan.

2. Conclusion

There is no evidence that the increase in Child Protection numbers has been due to any changes in practice or decision making. The right children are going on a Child Protection Plan and in the majority of cases this is after working with the family at Child in Need but the risks and need required escalation to Child Protection. Due to the complexity of need and risk, the children are remaining on a Child Protection Plan for longer to ensure the plan is tried and tested. However the audit highlighted that in cases where it is no longer safe for children to live at home, alternative care provision is put in place.

The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan will fluctuate and since Quarter 2 there has been a reduction in the number of children on a plan with the figure being 388 at the end of December 2019 and 374 on 30 January 2020.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not applicable

4. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Report to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board 28 November 2019 - Performance Reporting against the Council Business Plan - Quarter 2	https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=553&MId=5309&Ver=4

This report was written by Roz Cordy, who can be contacted on 01522 554403 or roz.cordy@lincolnshire.gov.uk.