

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 24th January 2012

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Education and Children – Cllr Pantelic

PART I

FOR INFORMATION, SCRUTINY AND CHALLENGE

WORKING WITH THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH CHILD PROTECTION PLANS AND THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER

1. Purpose of Report

To inform Members about the level of service activity in the context of increasing need for children's social care services in Slough.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

a) To note the actions being taken by the service and partner agencies to respond to increased pressure on services.

b) To accept a further report in relation to the delivery of the Gold Project for Family Placement Services at the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on March 22nd 2012.

3. Community Strategy Priorities

Celebrating diversity, enabling inclusion

- By identifying and prioritising services for vulnerable groups in the Slough population, by targeting support to meet the needs of children and young people's identified needs and by ensuring that we build on existing good practice and partnership working.

Adding years to Life and Life to years

- Through focussing on the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people and their parents and carers in Slough, and providing targeted services through partnership working including with the NHS to secure measurable improvements

Being Safe, Feeling Safe

- By offering effective support to families to help them do their best for their children so that children and young people are safe in their families and communities

- By ensuring services are effectively targeted to get the best use of all available resources
- By securing services via an early help offer whenever possible.
- By carrying out our statutory role as a local authority to provide services for children in need, to safeguard them and look after children whose parents are unable to do so.
- By working effectively with partner agencies so that they also contribute to safeguarding children and young people and demonstrate improved outcomes for those children and young people and their families.
- By ensuring that children and young people who are looked after have the standards of care and life opportunities that we would want for our own children with contributions from all partner agencies.

Prosperity for All

- By offering early education and family support to parents of young children so that they can focus on meeting their children's needs and overcoming personal and family difficulties that affect their ability to care for their children.
- By promoting educational achievement which gives children and young people in care and leaving care enjoyment in learning and increased opportunities for success in adult life.
- By maintaining high levels of Education, Employment and Training (EET) for young people who are looked after beyond 16 years of age.
- By promoting vulnerable young people's social and emotional development alongside advances in educational achievement.
- By supporting local nursery providers to secure optimum standards so that parents and carers are able to secure economic prosperity/independence for themselves and their family.

4. Other Implications

(a) Financial

Financial implications of the Safeguarding Improvement Plan were reported to Cabinet on 23rd January 2012.

Financial implications in respect of the Gold Project for Family Placement Service were reported to Cabinet on 17th October 2011. Looked After Children's placement costs represent the highest level of financial demand to Education and Children's Services directorate.

b) Risk Management

Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation
Early help offer is not sufficiently targeted.	C4EO (Centre for Excellence and Outcomes) is supporting the development and implementation of the Early Intervention Strategy for all partners in the context of the Improvement Plan requirements as part of sector led support offer.
Social Care is not sufficiently targeted.	Experienced interim staff have been recruited so that social care thresholds are consistently

Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation
	applied. Training, coaching and mentoring being commissioned for existing social workers and managers.
Resources fail to materialise as a result of Gold Projects.	Gold Projects are rigorously monitored for progress.
Partnership working is not fully developed.	Improvement Board addresses partnership issues through delivery of improvement plan.

c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

Under Section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998, it is unlawful for the Council to act in a way which is incompatible with human rights or it could result in the Council being subject to judicial review. The actions outlined in this report are designed to comply with the Human Rights considerations of young people specifically Article 8 Human Rights Act 1998 (the right to respect for private and family life). There are no other legal implications immediately arising from the report as it appears to be for information only.

d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An equalities impact assessment is not required in relation to this information report.

e) Workforce

All social care activity in Slough is subject to an improvement plan monitored by the Secretary of State. Theme 2 of the Improvement Plan addresses the developmental needs of the workforce. Plans for training, recruitment and retention are all in place.

5. Supporting Information

5.1 Background

The numbers of children looked after by the borough Council have increased as follows:-

March 09	137
March 10	172
March 11	168
November 11	189

The figures show a variable but consistent rise in the numbers of children whose level of need is so substantial that they require a statutory looked after service.

Similarly the number of children at risk of significant harm, as represented by the number of Child Protection Plans in place is as follows:-

March 09	140
March 10	118
March 11	142

Together these services represent the most intensive level of professional support requirements in social care.

The workload represented by these statutory obligations is arranged as follows:-

The Early Response Hub identifies early help for those families whose need for service can be addressed without a referral to Children's Social Care. Attached are 3 anonymised case summaries which show in outline how this approach is delivered. The cases chosen show one case resolved by the Early Intervention Hub, one case which needed to be referred to social care and one case which social care referred to early intervention for further work.

The cases are intended to demonstrate the degree of partnership working internally and externally.

Partnership working with Children subject to Child Protection Plans

Children at risk of significant harm are made subject to child protection plans through formalised national decision making processes identified in a document called "Working Together 2010" which forms the basis for all partners working on safeguarding and underpins all local policy, procedures and practice. The Berkshire Child Protection Procedures are also based on this. (see 'Background Papers'). Social workers would typically adopt a "Lead Professional" role in the delivery and monitoring of a child protection plan. Partner agencies contribute their information to ensure that the assessment of risk is accurate and services are proportionate at any one time. Once risks have reduced sufficiently it is likely that the family will receive continuing support from the Early Response Hub.

Partnership working with Children who are Looked After

Children looked after can sometimes feature as the most vulnerable and or most damaged in the social care system. The statutory nature of the service provided dictates the involvement of all partners in improving outcomes for children looked after including returning them to their parents', family's care or making permanent arrangements for them. Local authorities are requested to evidence that the range of services provided for looked after children improves their outcomes and narrows the gap between them and their peer groups.

Slough Borough Council has agreed to finance a Gold Project (Family Placement Service) to fund the recruitment and assessment of permanent families for a specific cohort of Looked after Children who are waiting and a range of in house placements for the current Looked After Children. The services generated by this short term investment will secure improved outcomes for other looked after children as the new services mature over the time of the project.

It is anticipated that both the numbers of Slough approved foster carers and the numbers of looked after children exiting care through Adoption or Special Guardianship will increase as a result of Slough Borough Council's investment. The FPS Gold Project Initiation Document PID and the December Highlight report are

attached for further detail as required. The detailed delivery of the Gold Project may be worthy of further scrutiny at a later date.

6 Conclusion

The report explains some of the activity taking place to address the increases in statutory activity in children's social care. If members require more detail in relation to either the Gold Project or Child Protection work, further reports can be made available at subsequent meetings.

7. Appendices Attached

Appendix One: Early Response Step Up. Case History

Appendix Two: Early Response Back to Care Case History

Appendix Three: Early Response Step Down Case History

Appendix Four: Family Placement Service Gold Project December highlight report

8. Background Papers

1) Working Together 2010 <http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/index.html>

2) Berkshire Child Protection Procedures <http://berks.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

3) October Cabinet agenda item 7, Looked After Children Review.

Presenting Issues

Vulnerable young person moving into area to live with uncle due to previous running away and breakdown of relationship with Mother

Child –

- Behaviour problems
- Previous history of absconding
- No school place
- Living with Uncle

Parent/Carer –

- Could not manage behaviour
- Concerns around poor association and absconding
- Risk of becoming school refuser

FIRST AGENCY INVOLVED:-

Early Response received referral from Social Care department outside Slough



Referred to Service Supporting Behaviour to assess behaviour and educational needs



Admissions

Supported uncle in getting a local school place where needs met via admission's panel

Beechwood School

With full package of identified needs around behaviour management

ACTIONS TAKEN / AGENCIES INVOLVED.

Team around the child/family coordinated by Early Response Family Services Worker (lead professional)



Financial Benefits

Advice and guidance around benefits/kinship care given to Uncle

Integrated Youth Service

Dedicated Youth Worker to work with young person and provide support including Local Youth Centre activities to engage on evening and weekends

Interventions & Outcomes for Child & Family (Coordinated through lead professional and ongoing Team Around the Family/Child meetings)

- Young person in education
- Young person no longer at risk or absconding from home
- Pro-active behaviour support package within school
- Dedicated Youth Service Worker providing support and mentoring
- Positive activities provided to minimise anti-social behaviour leading to improved peer interaction
- Parenting support provided to uncle which has lead to improved management of young person
- Support to uncle with finances to apply for child tax credit, child benefit and DSS

Presenting Issues

Mother with four children aged 12 months, 4, 6 & 8 years old, not meeting child's health appointments

Child -

- Youngest child not had immunisations
- 4 year old has Downs Syndrome and Mum not taken to recent health checks
- 4 year old poor attendance at nursery

Mother –

- Not working with professionals (ie. Special Needs staff/Educational Psychologist/Children's Centre Staff/Health Visitor)
- Aggressive and defensive to professionals
- Not done child's application to maintained school

FIRST AGENCY INVOLVED:-

Health visitor, Berkshire East Community Health Services.

Referred to Early Response Hub to advise Mum of seriousness of missing health appointments and to offer support for domestic abuse

Children's Centre:

Work with 4 year old, monitoring and safeguarding child's needs and escalating where required

Services for children with LDD:

Area SENCO supports child in childcare setting.

ACTIONS TAKEN / AGENCIES INVOLVED.

Team around the child/family

coordinated by Early Response Family Practitioner (**lead professional**)

Health Visitors

Monitoring health and well being of the two children under five, concerns around immunisations and lack of health checks for 4 year old

Thames Valley Police

Concerns around ongoing Domestic abuse and Mum's lack of engagement to assess risk

OUTCOMES (Coordinated through lead professional and ongoing Team Around the Family/Child meetings)

- Case considered with partners and facts ascertained in a professionals meeting
- Evidence from partnership working indicated heightened concerns over safeguarding and case referred to Social Care for assessment

Presenting Issues

Issues of neglect with Mother and her four children ages 6 Months, 3, 5 and 6 years old
Child –

- Children 'failure to thrive' speech and language issues
- Poor school attendance
- Children shabby, dirty appearance, not being fed before school
- Not meeting developmental milestones

Parent –

- Depressed, shy
- Not engaging with professionals
- Not understanding needs of children

FIRST AGENCY INVOLVED:-

Early Response received referral from Social Care

Initial joint home visit with Early Response Outreach Worker and Social Worker to agree action plan

Children's Centre

3 year old started at Children's Centre under statutory hours

Speech and Language

Arranged Speech & Language assessment

ACTIONS TAKEN / AGENCIES INVOLVED.

Team around the child/family coordinated by Early Response Family Services Worker (lead professional)

Citizen Advice Bureau

Advice provided on housing, debt and benefits

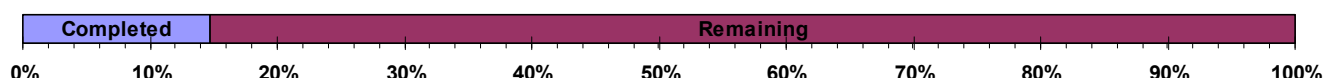
School

Meeting at school to establish issues and joint plan to address in partnership with the parent

Interventions & Outcomes for Child & Family (Coordinated through lead professional and ongoing Team Around the Family/Child meetings)

- Support in applying for school admissions, successful places found
- Grant for dining room table and chairs obtained to support healthy/family eating in the home
- Support to assist Mum to potty train child
- Improved attendance at school
- Grant for new uniforms for children to improve shabby appearance & children presenting as cleaner and happier
- Mum now engaging with professionals with new trust built including support for depression (GP)
- Mum attended parenting programme and improved parenting capacity

Family Placement Service (FSP)			Project SPONSOR	Clair Pyper	
Wards affected: All			Project MANAGER	Jill Forrest	
	Timeline	Budget	Issues & Risks	OVERALL STATUS	Date of update report
Current period	GREEN	GREEN	GREEN	GREEN	05/01/2012
<i>Previous month</i>	<i>GREEN</i>	<i>GREEN</i>	<i>GREEN</i>	<i>GREEN</i>	<i>02/12/2011</i>
Project start date:	19/10/2011		Anticipated Project end date:	31/03/2013	



Has this highlight report been agreed and authorised by the Project Sponsor? Yes No (draft)

Key activities completed / milestones achieved in **this** period:

Project Management - Jill Forrest

- Project Initiation Document ('PID') completed and signed off by Project Sponsor (Clair Pyper).
Action from 02/12/11 - Project plan and timeline to be drafted by Project Manager.
- To be completed.

1) Recruitment of Staff Strand - Lead JP

Action from 02/12/11 - 1 supported lodgings social worker still to be recruited.

- Temporary social worker started (fixed term contract not yet awarded).
Action from 02/12/11 - 4.5 staff recruited above will start in December 2011.

- Completed.
Action from 02/12/11 - Fixed term contracts to be appointed to.

- Staff member from FPS Team appointed to act up as Assistant Team Manager.
- Staff member transferred internally to Special Recruitment Project on 12/12/11.
- Two Fostering Social workers and one Placement Social worker, FPS Gold Project temporary workers recruited to fixed term contracts.
- Two external appointments to fixed term contracts (Placement Social worker and Special Recruitment Project Social worker).

2) and 3) In-house Fostering and SGO Strands - Lead RK

- 13 Special Guardianship Orders ('SGOs') have been granted since September 2011.

- 4 children matched to long term foster carers since September 2011.
- One foster carer approved by Fostering Panel November 2011.
- 6 Private SGO Assessments completed and approved by Fostering Panel; awaiting Court dates (not Looked After Children).
- Assessments in progress :-
 - 7 in-house unconnected foster carers being assessed.
 - 6 in-house connected foster carers being assessed (Friends and Family).
 - 2 Regulation 24 in-house connected foster carers are being assessed (Friends and Family).
 - 3 Special Recruitment Project SGO Assessments of long term foster carers (6 children).
 - One Private SGO Assessment.
- 17 new potential foster care applicants from marketing campaign.

4) Tracking of LAC data, Care Planning, Placement and Costs Strand - Lead FB

Action from 02/12/11 - Benchmark Looked After Children profile to be completed by Project Manager.

- Completed, presented to SMT 22/12/11, amended and signed off by Clair Pyper 28/12/11.

Action from 02/12/11 - Care Planning and Placement Tracking cycle of updating to commence.

- This has commenced and Strand meeting being arranged to agree processes and reporting.

5) Finance Strand - Lead BO (now IB)

- Finance are monitoring closely the FPS Gold Project budget and related spend to date.

6) Commissioning Strand - Lead DB

- Recruitment of two placement Social Workers (one in post – one to start).
- Induction for new social worker.
- Chase up and resolution of outstanding placement approvals.
- Draft care monitoring procedure and form.
- Preparation for issue of new individual placement agreements during January 2012.
- Independent Fostering Agency ('IFA') tender (contract to be implemented from April 2012).

7) Adoption In-house/purchased Strand - Lead CC

- 3 adopters approved since October.
- 2 adoption matches for Slough children since October.
- 1 adoption order since October.
- 3 Slough adopters matched with non Slough children since October where no Slough children were suitable.
- 8 adopter enquiries since October.
- 3 applicants on November Information session.
- 2 applicants on November preparation course.
- 5 initial visits carried out since October.
- 13 adopter assessments being undertaken - 2 sets are the foster carers of Slough children who they wish to adopt.
- 7 Slough children in adoptive placements awaiting adoption order.

8) Special Recruitment Strand - Lead CC

Action from 02/12/11 - Information day for special recruitment project arranged for the 10th December.

- Leaflets and posters designed, printed and distributed as above.
- Advertising campaign on schedule as above.
- Booklets printed and sent to enquirers.
- 21 enquiries made since October.
- Information session held on 10/12/11.
- 4 home visits carried out to prospective applicants and CRB disclosures applied for.

9) Supported Lodgings Strand - Lead JN

- Appointment of temporary social worker to begin work on supported lodgings scheme.
- Met with Recruitment and Retention Officer SM to look at how to target recruitment for this scheme.
- Temp social worker has begun to research local schemes available – internal and external providers.

10) Care Planning Strand - Lead KD

- New role of Group Manager for Looked After Children and Care Leavers commenced 05/12/11.
- Care Planning strand added to the FPS Gold project.

11) Marketing Strand - Lead SM

Action from 02/12/11 - Advertising campaign on local over ground trains and buses to run throughout December 2011.

- 50 Bus Rears across Uxbridge and Aldershot from 05/12/11 to 01/01/12.
- 300 train interior panels across First Great Western from 05/12/11 to 01/01/12.
- Guardian Magazine – there was a small ad' placed in the magazine on Saturday 3rd December.
- Big Issue – Big Issue ran a feature about children in care and we advertised (1/4 page) in the Christmas edition and the Review of 2011 edition.
- Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and Segro have included a copy of the advert in their monthly newsletters.
- Westfield (Shopping Centre) and Slough Train Station, staff handed out leaflets, promotional bags and talked about the project to the public.
- Local Venues/Businesses, Most of the businesses along the Bath Road - Orange, Fiat, LG Electronics, Regus, Black and Decker, GSK, Blackberry RIM, Leaseplan – took leaflets/posters to display. Leaflets were also distributed to the following: Globe Business Park, Marlow - TNT post, Lexmark, Lex Vehicle Leasing Ltd. Asda and Tesco in Slough; Waitrose in Maidenhead, Hillingdon Leisure Centre and Montem Leisure Centre, Slough cinema.
- Schools, flyers were distributed in nine Maidenhead schools.
- Special Recruitment Project part time Marketing Officer's contract came to an end.
- FPS Gold Project Marketing Officer started.
- Use of media opportunities :-
Fostering and adoption featured prominently in the news in December: BBC Panorama's - The Truth about Adoption <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b019307z>.

The Fostering Network's announcement on the foster care crisis <http://www.fostering.net/media/2011/crisis-looms-foster-care-in-2012>.

Government announcement on adoption.

FPS used these events to start our social media activity (Twitter) through our dedicated Communications Officer. The Family Placement Service team also provided a foster carer as a spokesperson for the Today programme (BBC Radio 4).

Key activities / milestones scheduled for **next** period:

Key messages/target audiences

We have started to separate out the different key messages and audiences for the different services so that appropriate materials can be produced in 2012.

Strand 1 Recruitment of Staff - Lead JP

- JP to follow up on references once received.
- Decision to be made about fixed term supported lodgings post.
- Decision to be made about fixed term recruitment and retention post.
- Start dates to be agreed for fixed term posts and induction plans to be in place.
- Business case regarding pay scales for new employees to be agreed through requests for more experienced workers to be paid above the bottom level of pay scale to reflect their level of expertise SMT requesting further information.

Strand 2 and 3 In-house Fostering and SGO (both connected and unconnected) - Lead RK

- February Foster panel - 2 fostering assessments to be presented for approval.
- Fostering Preparation Group - Scheduled for 4th, 11th and 18th February.
- Suitability for prep group 17 units - 10 couples - 7 single prospective foster carers.
- If further enquiries mean more applicants then a second Fostering Preparation Group will be run.

Strand 4 Tracking of LAC data, Care Planning, Placement and costs - Lead FB

- Now that the benchmarking data has been completed and analysed, Strand 4 will meet to design and implement the monthly cycle of data gathering, updating and reporting.
- Two staff to meet on a weekly basis to confirm all placement movements/changes and review cost predictions for data update. Commissioning and Contracts Manager will also attend on a monthly basis to look at any commissioning issues.

Strand 5 Finance - Lead BO (now IB)

- Strand Lead changed to IB.
- IB will continue to monitor actual spend and commitments against the FPS Gold Project and FPS core service budgets.
- Strand 5 will meet after the Strand 4 meeting to design and implement the monthly cycle for tracking financial outcomes relating to individual children.

Strand 6 Commissioning - Lead DB

- The new capacity in the Placement Commissioning Team will enable an audit of placement approvals and contracts for all existing LAC and Care Leavers placements.
- Issue of new individual placement agreements to providers for individual children ahead of new IFA tender starting 1 April 2012.
- Preparation of provider database using *ContrOCC* (financial database) and collation of vacancies information.
- Integration, training and induction of Placement Commissioning Team.

Strand 7 Adoption In-house/purchased - Lead CC

- Adoption matches for 3 children being presented at January 2012 adoption panel (1 within Berkshire consortium and 2 with Voluntary Adoption Agency).
- 5 prospective adopters put forward for January 2012 information session being run by Windsor and Maidenhead.
- 3 prospective adopters put forward for February preparation course being run by Windsor and Maidenhead.
- 7 prospective adopters due to be presented for approval in the next 4 months.

Strand 8 Special Recruitment Project 5 years and over - Lead CC

- 10 initial home visits to new Special Recruitment Project (SRP) applicants scheduled in January 2012.
- Family finders allocated to children within the FPS Service will meet on 18th January to discuss the identified children for the SRP and agreeing any issues and actions.
- DVD and profiles of children 5 and over and sibling groups to be produced.
- 3 day preparation course to be organised beginning of February 2012.
- 1 assessment of a potential SRP carer to commence in January 2012.
- Childcare experience to be organised for some of the other applicants using experienced Slough foster carers to support them.

Strand 9 Supported Lodgings - Lead JN

- Research to be completed on local supported lodgings schemes in Slough and other areas including voluntary and private sector:-
 - Local hostel accommodation with support.
 - Semi-supported accommodation.
 - Supported lodgings.
- Project team to establish the level of need for supported lodgings.
- Arrange to meet Reading Fostering Manager to discuss their supported lodgings scheme.
- Project team to gather information regarding the external placements currently purchased for 16 + young people.
- Project team members to attend 16+ Team meeting.
- To update Slough supported lodgings policy.
- To update enquiry form for Family Placement service to reflect the needs for supported lodgings carers.
- To review the Slough supported lodgings information booklet.

Strand 10 Care Planning - Lead KD

- Draft LAC and 16+ Team Action Plan to be circulated for comments. Key themes :-
 - Management oversight including supervision and recording improvements.
 - Case transfers to LAC Service from Duty now immediately following Initial Assessment since restructure of SW teams 05/12/11.
 - Progressing Care Plans.
 - Reviewing all children with Section 20 Legal Status.
 - Reviewing all children in Care Proceedings mapping timelines.
 - Ensure Parallel Planning for all children from second Statutory Childcare Review.
 - Life story work and adoption files to commence from Statutory Looked After Review.
 - Increase children and young people's involvement in their own care planning.
 - Improvement of quality of Pathway Plans for all LAC and care leavers.
 - Use the information gathered to inform the work on sufficiency.

Strand 11 Marketing - Lead SM

- Run training session with Family Placement Service and Placement Commissioning Team focusing on agreeing key messages and shared approach to initial enquiries.
- Develop a system for recording and analysing response to marketing initiatives and conversion rates from enquiries to successful approval.
- Family Placement Service Enquiry Form to be redesigned.
- Write design brief for new adverts/materials for use in 2012 to focus on specific (and different) target audiences/services. Includes agreeing key messages.
- Organise communications meeting between Children's Social Care operational staff and, Marketing and Communications Manager and Communications Officer responsible for family placement services to ensure that we can maximise potential marketing opportunities.
- Identify potential 'champions' i.e. carers and staff who are willing to talk about their experiences for media use.
- Design case study template for use in the media.
- Work closely with the Slough Family Information Service to promote the FPS Gold campaign.
- Press release articles Slough Observer and the Slough Express 06/1/12.

Key issues of risk / obstacles to progress:

Project Management

- Succession planning for project management from April 2012.
- Success of advertising campaign yet to be assessed.
- Recruitment to all fixed term project posts not yet complete.
- There is strong possibility that not every one attending Fostering Preparation Group will progress onto next stage of assessment, based on Slough and national experience.
- Possible difficulties in gathering data from social work staff due to time constraints/caseload commitments in line with reporting deadlines.
- Capacity issues in performance team.
- If the recruitment campaign is very successful, capacity of existing workers to take on more assessments.
- Changes of the child's allocated social worker hinders progressing the permanency plans.
- Applicants-may not be suitable.
- Delayed CRB checks returns.
- Limited capacity in the Communications Team may prevent full use of marketing opportunities such as Twitter.