

Children's Services Performance Report Quarter Three 2019/20

Midlothian 

Progress in delivery of strategic outcomes

'Our vision is to improve families' lives by giving them the support they need, when they need it'

Children's Services have shown improvement throughout 2019/20 and it is our intention to improve on this. Inspection reports and performance data evidence improvement in many areas of work which in turn is improving the outcomes for most of our children and young people within Midlothian.

Permanence and Care Excellence Programme (PACE): The PACE programme is continuing with a further four aims now identified as detailed below. The main driver for continuing with these further aims is to ensure that we continue to be ambitious in our future planning for those children and young people who cannot remain living with their parents.

Scottish Government and the Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children view the level of change and improvement for Midlothian's most vulnerable children as a great achievement and have requested that we continue to be part of the PACE programme, and continue to share our learning with other Councils. The independent evaluation of the introduction of the 2 week planning meeting evidenced the positive impact this small change in practice brought: 'earlier work with parents to discuss permanence, and set and agree care plans' & 'ensures clear permanence policy in place, providing clarity on responsibilities, deadlines and processes'.

The identified 4 further aims are:

Aim 1 – Children who are looked after at home for more than 2 years will have a looked after review looking at their whole period of time being looked after at home.

Aim 2 – Children who become looked after and accommodated will have a recommendation for Permanence (including a permanent return home) within 30 weeks of becoming looked after and accommodated.

Aim 3 – Children who have had recommendation for permanence away from home will have the decision ratified by the Agency Decision Maker within 14 weeks of the LAAC review recommended permanence.

Aim 4 – Court submissions will be lodged within 16 weeks of the Agency Decision Maker sign off.

With reference to Aim 2, in our first year we managed to refer 95% of accommodated children to a Permanence LACC Review. In our second year, this number dropped to 57%. The reasons for this drop off are varied but include: a baby being born 11 weeks prematurely and requiring to stay in hospital for a considerable period and a parent being admitted to a residential unit to detox. In summary, the delay in making permanence decisions for these children was unavoidable and in the large majority of cases entirely appropriate. Over the course of the two years and taking our aggregate percentage, we have managed to refer 78% of children to Permanence LAAC Reviews. Our permanence overview group (POG) continues to meet 6 weekly and we have broadened the remit of this group to consider those children waiting on section 11/kinship care orders.

Aims 1, 3 and 4 were all successfully achieved.

Going forward we have just begun discussions with CELCIS around agreeing a timetable to evaluate the decisions we took in 2017/18 to find out if they were the right decisions and to assess if the child/young person remains in the same placement and identify if there has been a positive impact upon the child's wellbeing.

Mental Health: The Midlothian Early Action Partnership (MEAP) project started in January 2019, to effect system change so that children, young people and young adults get timely and appropriate mental health support. The first year of the project has provided a learning journey, with opportunities to review and refine our approach to the project delivery. We have achieved several key milestones, which is summarised below.

We established the MEAP Steering Group, building a strong foundation of trust and respect between partners. We also recruited two project team members, namely the project lead and youth engagement officer. We commenced with three Tests of Change in January 2019, using a community-centred approach designed by Nesta, called the '100 Day Challenge'. This supported us to catalyse our efforts to test ideas around improving mental health and wellbeing for Midlothian's children and young people. As part of the wider project, Midlothian Sure Start is busy undertaking the Test of Change around embedding trauma-informed practice within primary schools. This will continue in earnest during 2020.

Partners undertook a scoping exercise for the larger mapping work, with support from consultants, which informed the tender specification for the commissioning of the mapping exercise itself. We have recently commissioned consultants Dartington, to carry out this mapping exercise.

In terms of an evaluation of the project, feedback from those who took part reported that relationships and connections between professionals have improved, the tests of change created more opportunities for cross-agency collaboration. Some young people and families have already reported feeling more included in decision-making processes through engagement and participation and feeling better able to influence the system; however, we have only touched the surface in this regard and we look forward to extending this to a wider population, through future Tests of Change. We have seen a small shift in planning and resources by CAMHS through taking a different approach to supporting kinship carers. This is a small yet significant step towards early and preventative action. Adults involved in the 100 Day Challenges and those attending training sessions have reported an increase in their confidence and knowledge, so that they can better support children, young people and families. To summarise, we have accomplished what we set out to achieve at this stage and have used our learning to update timescales and methods going forward. Our progress and learning to date supports our belief that our Partnership are in a strong position to deliver our objectives during the life course of this Early Action project. In order to ensure that the work MEAP is doing is not duplicated we are setting up a strategic wellbeing and mental health oversight group which shall ensure that all the different funding streams and work being undertaken across the community planning partnership around this area of work is set out in a plan with identified actions to take forward. The strategic oversight group shall have the responsibility of ensuring the plan is taken forward and to bring a progress report to the GIRFEC Board on a 6 monthly basis.

Participation: The Champions board and the participation of the children and young people with staff from the local authority and with partner agencies (SCRA, Police, Health, Education & 3rd sector) continues to be a success. The Champions project participation assistant has now successfully launched a monthly lunch club in each of our 6 high schools for care experienced young people. The recent launch of the Midlothian Corporate Parent Strategy and Plan 2020-2023 highlights ambitious targets within the plan that promotes our ethos to ensure all care experienced children and young people have access to the right support at the right time.

Kinship Care: Midlothian's Kinship Carers continue to be a key resource for children and young people who can no longer remain with their parents. Children's services remain committed to supporting kinship carers both financially and emotionally to ensure that all placements are offered the right support when needed. The recent PACE statistics for 2018/19 illustrate that the majority of children (70%) who are unable to live with their birth parents, were provided with a secure and stable setting through a kinship arrangement. This is in line with our policy direction to secure children within an extended family arrangement wherever possible.

Our annual kinship carer event was held on 21st November 2019. The presentation from the kinship carers was around raising the profile and understanding what it's like to be a kinship carer and what they provide for their children. The event was well attended by 12 kinship carers and staff across children's services and was collaboratively developed and run by 3 kinship carers and a member of staff from our family placement team. The focus of this event was to develop understanding of the emotions involved for both children and carers when a child is placed in kinship care and how children's services can then support these placements effectively through such a difficult transition. The meetings with CAHMS following a request at the 100 Day Challenge is one form of support that has been developed. Children's services staff benefitted greatly from the first-hand accounts of kinship carers and clear suggestions around what may be helpful to others in the future. Recommendations from this event shall be taken forward by the Family Placement Team and the monitoring and reporting of their progress shall be taken to the quarterly Strategic Kinship Care group.

Child Protection: At the end of Q3 reporting we had 55 children (25 families) on our child protection register which equates to 3.1 per 1000 of the population compared with the national rate of 2.9. This figure has increased from the last quarter and is slightly above the national average. Nationally there has been a 3% increase in the number of child protection registrations from 2017 (latest figure). The implementation of the Safe and Together model continues with training of all staff being rolled out.

Our child protection statistics have remained relatively static over the year despite increased referrals into the service. The reasoning for this is as a result of the service review in 2017 where we front loaded the service to ensure we are able to respond to referrals at an earlier stage to prevent them escalating.

Looked after away from Home: There are 169 children and young people looked after away from home both in and out-with Midlothian. This number is higher than the previous quarter (159 children & young people). The current rate per 1,000 of young people looked after in Midlothian is 8.7 which remains well below the national of 10.6. Nationally there has been a 1% decrease from 2017 to 2018 (latest figure) in the number of children and young people looked after away from home. Having undertaken an audit of all the children and young people who have come into care over the past quarter a high percentage have gone into kinship care. The reasons for accommodating children and young people remain around drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, domestic abuse and neglect.

Looked after at home: In Q3 there are 59 children and young people looked after at home. This is a decrease on Q2 (61). They have all been reviewed by the Interim Independent reviewing officer. The current rate per 1,000 of young people looked after at home in Midlothian is 3.0 which is lower than the national rate of 3.7. Nationally there has been a significant reduction of children looked after at home (26% reduction from 2008 – 2018 – latest figure) Within Midlothian this number has also decreased by 24% from December 2018.

Our Interim LAC reviewing Officer's post has now been extended for a further year which will help to continue to embed the LAC reviewing process into practice and ensure a consistent approach for all our LAC children in Midlothian.

The CEYP funding received from Scottish Government is continuing to support our LAC population's attainment and the recruitment of an Educational Psychologist to work specifically with this group alongside increasing outreach support capacity will help to support this priority area of work.

Whole Systems Funding: We have secured funding from Scottish Government to strengthen our existing early intervention approach to youth offending with a focus on training. The funding will also be used to continue to develop supports and interventions. Within Q3 we continue to hold multi-agency meetings for the ten most vulnerable young people who are coming to the attention of Police Scotland. By taking a holistic approach we identify who is the best person to work with the young person to try and prevent an escalation in their behaviours.

Challenges and Risks

Young People with complex Needs: Children's Services budget continues to remain a significant and ongoing challenge. Some of this is in part as a result of several factors:

- Secure care is a very expensive resource and often children's services have limited input as to whether or not a young person is secured. Therefore the importance of having a multi-agency approach to young people who are at risk of secure is promoted via the Vulnerable Young Person's Protocol.
- Young people who require a high level of specialised care and have severe and complex needs. Whilst there is a lack of specialised resources for those young people who require this high level of support across Scotland, within Midlothian we have opened two additional houses to accommodate 5 young people. We have commissioned two different agencies to provide their package of care and support, this good practice model allows the young people to remain within their communities, close to their families and attending Saltersgate School. Ongoing work around the transition from school into adult services is ongoing.
- Young people who are 16+ and require somewhere to live – the continuing care and aftercare agenda is challenging and we have begun discussion with the National Housing Project to look at commissioning a contract over the next 3 years which would allow us to better plan and have a clear pathway of what is on offer if they chose to remain in continuing care/aftercare.
- Mental Health – CAMHS waiting list continues to be a challenge however within Midlothian we are keen to work together to identify other alternatives which could support the child/young person. A strategic mental health group is about to be established which shall report into the GIRFEC Board. We are keen to ensure that we have a good oversight of all the resources available and to capture the scale of need for wellbeing and specialised mental health services. We liaise regularly with our colleagues from CAHMS in order to address any immediate concerns.

Whilst these 4 work streams are complex and at times difficult to plan for we remain committed to identifying new ways of working to ensure we have the resources in place to meet the many different needs of our children and young people within our communities.

Continuing Care: Following the launch of the guidance to support children's services staff meet the Continuing Care requirements, the Care Inspectorate have recently registered Children's Services to provide care to adults. This means that the Family Placement Team will now be registered as a service provider for three service areas, adults, fostering and adoption. In effect, some carers will be dual registered as both adult carers **and** foster carers and governed by the associated legislation and regulation.

We continue to address the challenge of making sure young people can remain in their care placements until 21. Whilst we fully support this practice it does pose challenges for resources such as our foster carer reserve and residential provision. However, we continue to review this and consider how to be more creative in the use of our existing provision.

After Care: Similarly to Continuing Care, the challenges of delivering services to those leaving the care system continue to be significant. We continue to liaise with our own housing department, other local authorities and Scottish Government to identify a model that supports young people who are 16+ however, as a result of their chaotic lifestyles are unable to continue residing with their foster carer, in their residential house or in homeless

accommodation. Whilst legislation through the 2014 Act promotes continuing care the reality of 'after care' is very different. We are looking at various different models.

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry: The most recent Section 21 is a significant piece of work that requires both skilled and knowledgeable staff to undertake this task. The request to identify all foster carers back to the 1930's and analyse the data to identify any allegations made and report on this by the end of January 2020 is challenging. We have requested and been successful in getting an extension until the end of April to complete this large piece of work.

Integrated Children's Services Plan: A new 3 year plan must be ready by March 2020. Work is progressing with our partners on this project however it is a significant piece of work that requires a commitment to engage with service users and communities to deliver a plan that improves outcomes for our children and young people across Midlothian. This coupled with the Joint Children's Services Inspection is creating additional work within the service to ensure we are ready for the inspection with our partners. Staff have been seconded to concentrate solely on these two significant pieces of work.

Children Services

Midlothian



Successes and Challenges

Corporate Performance Indicators (latest)

0 13 0 6

Service Plan Actions (latest)

0 7 0

Service Plan PIs (latest)

1 4 0 6

Service Risks (latest)

3

Corporate PIs Off Target as at 31st January 2020

PIs 0

No Off Target Corporate PIs

Service Plan Actions Off Target as at 31st January 2020

Actions 0

No Off Target Actions

Service Plan PIs Off Target as at 31st January 2020

PIs 1

Measure the increase in number of care experienced young people going to college/university/employment

High Risks as at 31st January 2020

Risks 0

3 Risks at Medium and 0 Risks are high

Key PIs
 Off Target
 On Target
 Data Only Indicator
 Data is not yet available

Key Actions
 Off Target
 On Target/Complete
 Data is not yet available

Key PIs
 Off Target
 On Target
 Data Only Indicator
 Data is not yet available

Key Risks
 High Risk / Medium Risk
 Data is not yet available