

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE CASE-LOADS QUARTERLY UPDATE

To: Audit and Accounts Committee

Date: 20 September 2018

From: Lou Williams

Electoral Division(s): All

Purpose: **Arrangements for Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Adults** – to report on Children's Social Care case-loads.

Concerns were previously raised by this Committee regarding high caseloads. Therefore this report provides a quarterly update to the Committee on children's social care case-loads to enable the Committee to monitor the potential risk involved.

Key Issues:

Following the Children's Change Programme units and teams have now located into the new districts. This initially caused some short term movement of cases, meaning for some units they are over the anticipated caseload. During the last quarter most of the districts have remained at a consistent high case load level, however, these have reduced in City and South Cambridgeshire to still high but more manageable levels. The graph below highlights some disparity when comparing total caseloads against each of the districts. You will see from the graph below that Fenland, Ely and Hunts units continue to have fewer cases compared to those in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

Recommendation:

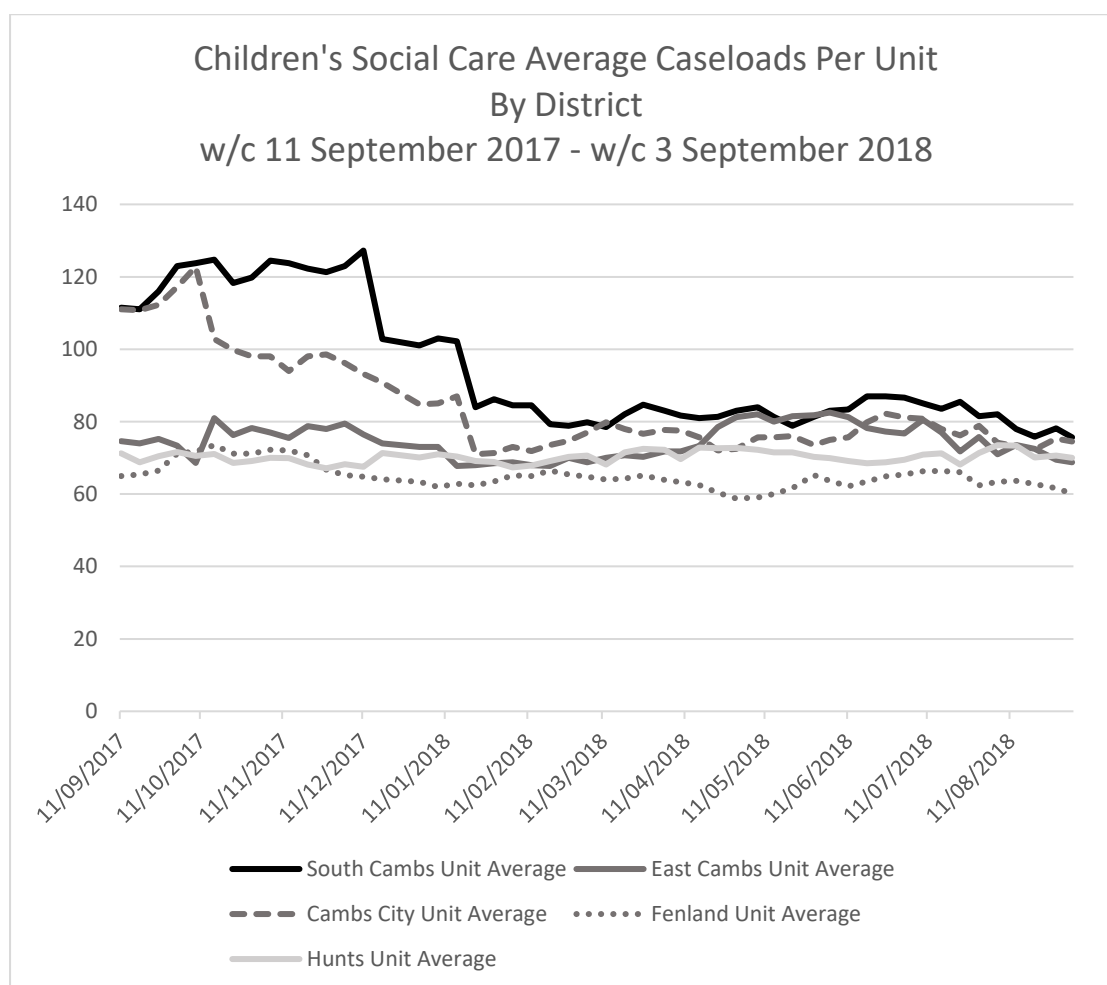
- a) To note and comment on the report.
- b) To note the continued monitoring of caseloads for the Children's Social Work Units by Children and Families Leadership Team.

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1. BACKGROUND

The below highlights number of cases for each of the district areas between 11 September 2017 and 03 September 2018.

Children's Social Care Unit Caseloads



- 1.2 The Children's Social Work Units comprise a Consultant Social Worker, a Senior Social Worker, two Social Workers, one of whom can be an ASYE, (social worker in their first year of employment post qualification), a Unit Co-ordinator and Clinician support for three days a week. Each unit is also supported by two Family Workers from within the District. The units are established to support on average 60 children.
- 1.3 The Children's Social Work Units work with children from pre-birth to the age of 18. They become involved with children after the initial assessment of the risk to the child from Integrated Front Door and will undertake support to families under Section 47 Children Act 1989 - child protection, Section 17 Children Act 1989 - Child In Need and all legal proceedings, private law or public law. The work of the unit is underpinned by the desire to build meaningful relationships

with children and for one unit to know and understand the child's story and travel with them on their journey through social work services.

- 1.4 Children aged 14 and above who are Looked After are supported by the 14 - 25 Service, which includes dedicated teams for care leavers and Unaccompanied Young People.

2.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The movement of units into the new Districts, as part of the Children's Change Programme, is underpinned with the principle of:
- causing the least disruption as possible to the lead worker for the child,
 - maintaining relationships where possible.

Looked after Children are now transitioning to the 14-25 service at the most appropriate time, nearest their 14th Birthday.

- 2.2 Work continues to be undertaken by the District Safeguarding and Early Help Managers to identify which children could be supported to step down to Early Help Services within the District, which children can be closed for social work services as their plan has been successfully completed and which children need to be supported by another District, depending on where they reside. This work is ongoing and is being regularly reviewed to ensure the Early Help work is targeted to support families where the social care units are involved and children who are at the edge of care.
- 2.3 The Integrated Front Door have continued to have vacancies within the service which has impacted on the throughput of assessments in a timely way, further impacting on the levels of cases transferring to the units. These vacancies have been filled by agency workers in recent months which has improved these issues.
- 2.4 Workloads in the City and South Cambridgeshire presently remain higher than in the North, but have decreased over the last quarter and stabilised. As previously suggested we have successfully moved one Unit from Ely to Cambridge City and one unit from Huntingdon to South Cambridgeshire. There are now 16 units in South and 16 Units in North, which better reflects the demand we have seen over the last year.
- 2.5 We have been successful in recruiting to vacant posts in the North and these services have identified children who are no longer in need of services or who can be supported by Early Help, which was evidenced in the significant reduction in caseloads, even though the referral rate remains higher than expected.
- 2.6 Unfortunately, we have not had the same success in recruiting to the vacancies in South Cambridgeshire and City and whilst two new units moving into this service has increased staff morale, as has the reduction in caseloads, the vacancy rate means the work continues to be undertaken by Units with vacancies and this is impacting on staff morale. Vacancies are being filled with agency social workers when they are available.

- 2.7 As a result of the vacancies, Consultant Social Workers have been not only managing the staff within their units and overseeing the care planning for the children, but have been holding their own caseloads. This is not sustainable or acceptable in the longer term.

3.0 FUTURE PLANS

- 3.1 CYP Committee agreed on 22 May 2018, a proposal as to how the children social work workforce could be structured in the future to ensure they are holding reasonable caseloads of between 17 and 20 children, with good management oversight from their line managers and efficient care planning for children. The new structure will be implemented from the first week in November 2018.
- 3.2 Transformation, HR and the Assistant Director for Children and Families are leading on enhancing the way we advertise for and recruit social workers as it is apparent this is a challenge in Cambridge City in particular. A successful campaign was run in spring, jointly with Adult Services, which secured four new social workers. This campaign continues. In September we will have a recruitment stall at the national Community Care Live Conference in London with the purpose of recruiting social workers to Cambridgeshire.
- 3.3 We have worked jointly with Peterborough on an overseas recruitment campaign which has successfully recruited twenty two social workers who are starting their employment with Cambridgeshire County Council in October 2018. Once these workers are in post, the new structure will start with a full complement of staff in November 2018.
- 3.4 Caseloads are monitored by the Leadership Team on a weekly basis, with an action plan in place oversee the transitioning of cases. This includes a detailed look at the demand for social work services in each District.
- 3.5 The New Teams and District Early Help services will continue to work closely together ensuring families are receiving the right services, from the right teams, at the right time.
- 3.6 Whilst we anticipate the proposed restructuring will reduce the number of children's cases a social worker holds, we acknowledge there will need to be a period of at least twelve weeks carefully managed transitioning of cases from November onwards. This remains an area of concern and one that will remain under sharp focus by the senior leadership team.

<i>Source Documents</i>	Location
None	