

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE CASE-LOADS QUARTERLY UPDATE

To: Audit and Accounts Committee

Date: 29th May 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.

Recommendations:

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.

Key Issues:

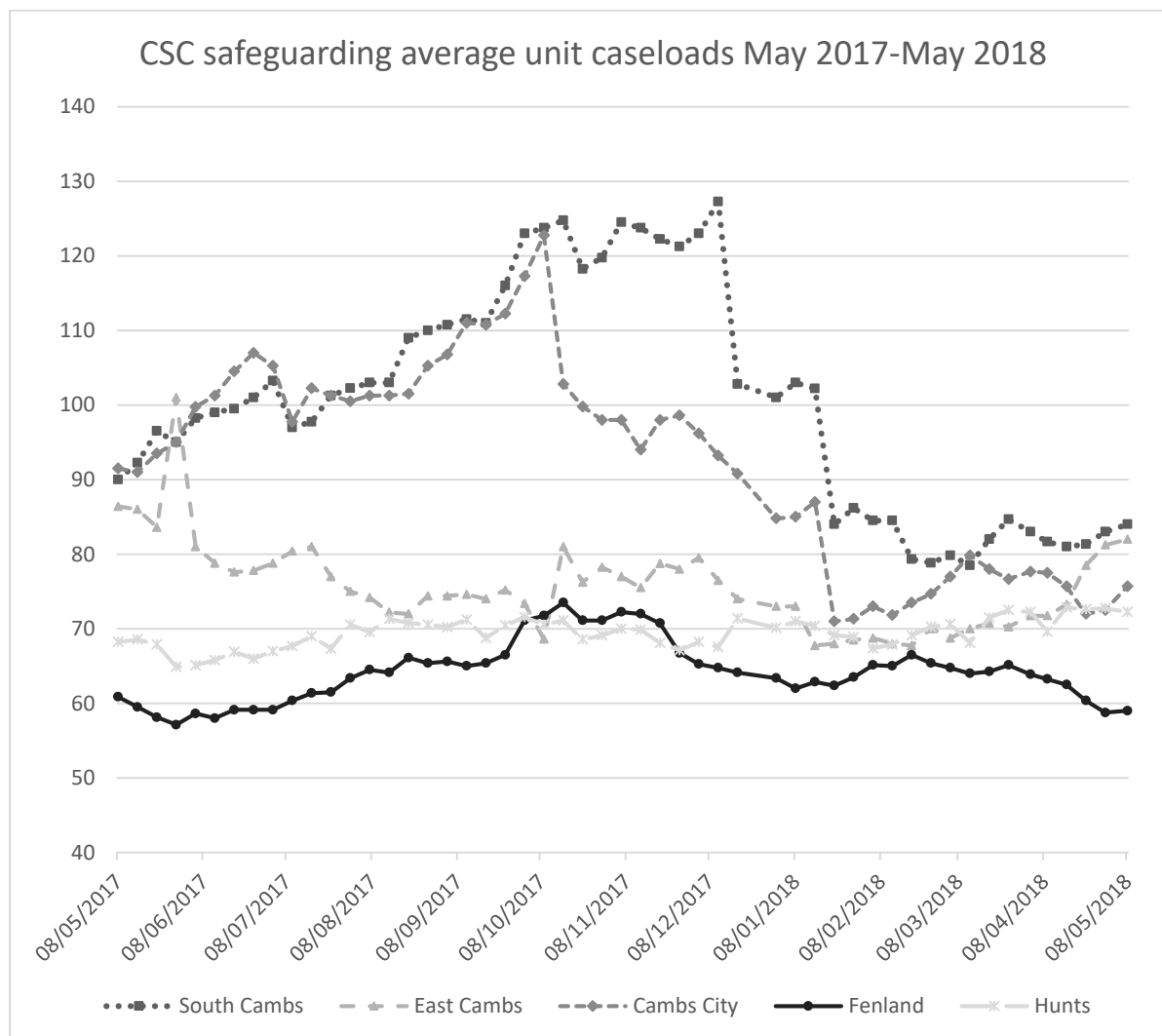
Following the Children's Change Programme units and teams have now located into the new districts which caused some short term movement of cases, meaning for some units they are over the anticipated caseload. During the last quarter most of the districts have remained at a consistent high case load level, 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 have fewer cases compared to those in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

<i>Officer contact:</i>	
Name:	Sarah-Jane Smedmor
Post:	Assistant Director, Children and Families Services
Email:	Sarah-jane.smedmor@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	1223 20

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The below highlights number of cases for each of the district areas between 08 May 2017 and 08 May 2018 September.

Children's Social Care (CSC) 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 (Assessed and Supported Year of Practice, a 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, has been 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 across to Early Help 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, given where they reside.
- 2.3 District Safeguarding and District Early Help Managers are working together to identify where children and their families are best supported, allowing for many of the children who are currently supported by social work units to be supported by Family Workers. 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.
- 2.4 The Integrated Front Door focusses on identifying the right services, for the right children at the right time, allowing us to continually gain a clearer idea of the need and demand for social work services in particular Districts. It is of note that children identified as being in need of social work services by the Integrated Front Door to Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire has been higher than other Districts.
- 2.5 The Integrated Front Door have had 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.
- 2.6 Workloads in the City and South Cambridgeshire presently remain higher than in the North, but have decreased over the last quarter. As previously suggested we have successfully move one Unit for 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 ten months.

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.

- 2.9 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 A proposal is being shared with Children and Young People (CYP) Committee on 22 May 2018, outlining 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.
- 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 in particular. A successful campaign was run in spring, jointly with Adult Services, which secured four new social workers.
- 3.3 We have also worked jointly with Peterborough on an overseas recruitment campaign which has also successfully recruited three social workers who will start within the next four months.
- 3.4 Caseloads are monitored by the Leadership Team on a weekly basis, with an action plan in place to oversee the transitioning of cases. This includes a detailed look at the demand for social work services in each District.
- 3.5 The Units and District Early Help services are working ever more closely together and this is expected to reduce numbers of children open to the units who are being worked with as children or young people in need, as District Early Help services increase their focus on targeted areas of work.
- 3.6 While we expect these and similar actions to reduce caseloads in the units, 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	