

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE CASE-LOADS QUARTERLY UPDATE**

*To:* **Audit and Accounts Committee**  
*Date:* **21<sup>st</sup> November 2017**  
*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 which caused some short term movement of cases, meaning for some units they are over the anticipated caseload. Over the last quarter most of the districts have remained at a consistent high case load level. However the graph below does highlight some disparity when comparing total caseloads against each of the districts. You will see from the graph below that Fenland, Ely and Hunts have around 40- 60 fewer cases compared to Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

*Recommendation:*

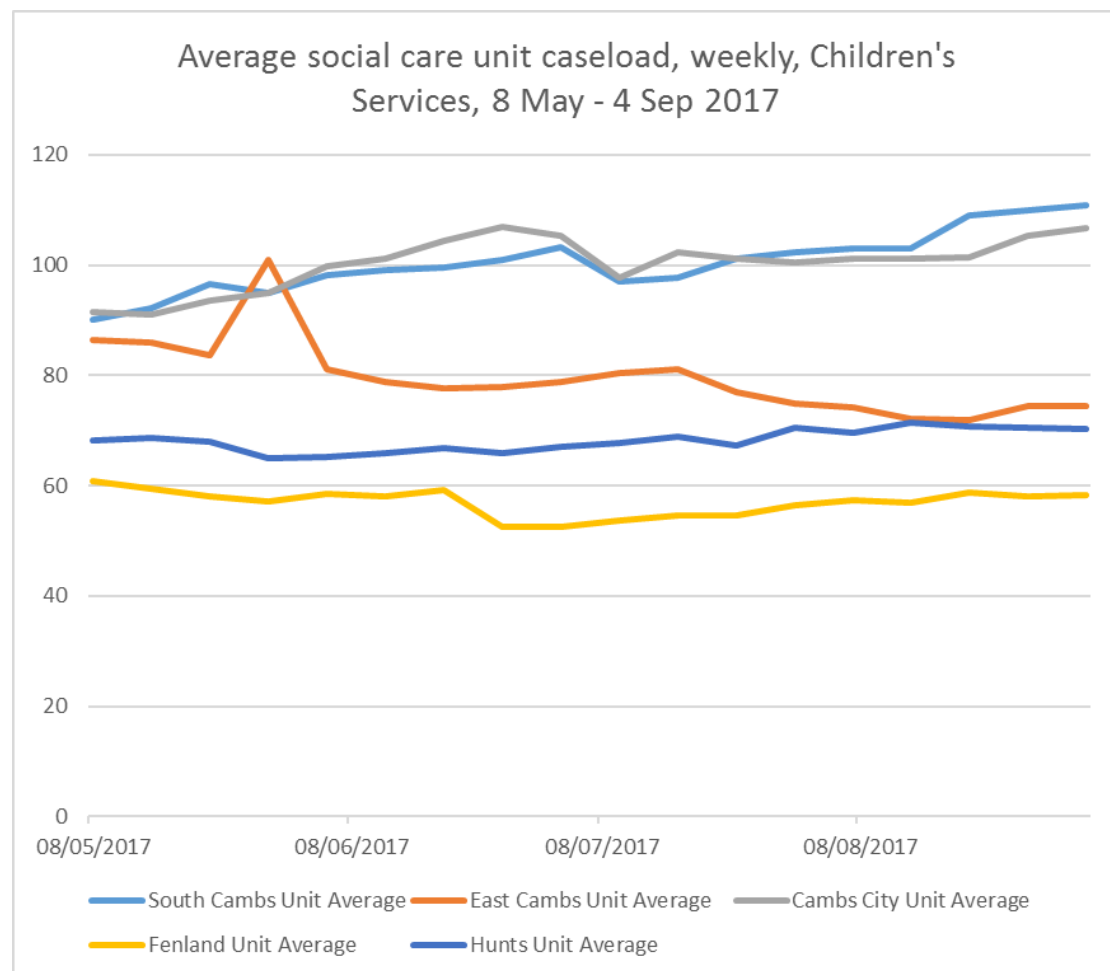
- a) to note and comment on the report.
- b) To note the continued monitoring of caseloads for the Children's Social Work Units by Children and Families Leadership Team.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

The below highlights number of cases for each of the district areas between 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and 4<sup>TH</sup> September 2017.

### 1.1



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) and Clinician support for three days a week. The Senior Social role is a new role and appointments are being confirmed for this. 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, maintain relationships where possible.

Looked after Children are now transitioning to the 14-25 service at the most appropriate time, nearest their 14<sup>th</sup> 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 The Early Help offer in the Districts was established in the first week of July 2017, alongside of the social work units. 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. Staff for the fifth unit in Cambridge and a fifth unit in South Cambridgeshire have been finalised. It has taken up to 12 weeks from interview to have many of the staff for these units in post, given a mixture of the normal notice periods and the fact that we have not been successful in shortlisting in the first round of recruitment campaign. This means that one unit in City and one unit in South Cambridgeshire are still to be fully populated. The staff who are now in post for these units are working in other units in their District to provide additional capacity. Vacancies are being filled with agency social workers when they are available. 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.

- 2.7 The children in March, Chatteris and Whittlesey who were being supported by the units in Ely have now transitioned to the units in Huntingdonshire and Wisbech, as detailed in the Children's Change Programme. This has allowed one unit in Ely to transition to South Cambridgeshire, to support the higher numbers of referrals into this part of the County.
- 2.8 The Units in the North have worked hard on recruitment to vacant posts and on identifying children who were no longer in need of services or could be supported by Early Help, which was evidenced in the significant reduction in caseloads, even though the referral rate remains higher than expected.
- 2.9 This means the current unit establishment is 6 Units for Cambridge, 5 Units for South Cambridgeshire, 4 Units for Ely, 4 Units for Wisbech, 4 Units for March, 5 Units in Huntingdon and 4 Units in St Neots.
- 2.10 However, given the continuing higher numbers of referrals for the last 9 months into the South of Cambridgeshire, we now have equal referral rates across the South and North, meaning one of the units for the North will move to the South by the end of November. This will help to ease pressures in South Cambridgeshire where there will be 6 units.
- 2.11 The higher numbers of cases in South Cambridgeshire and City is having an impact on the timeliness of assessments and care planning for children and an understandable effect on staff morale. It is envisaged that the additional unit in South Cambridgeshire will increase moral and enhance outcomes for children.
- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 As noted above, the Integrated Front Door has a key role to play in

helping to control the flow of work into the Units by ensuring that only those children for whom there is a clear role for specialist children's social work intervention progress to the Units. For other children, the front door may signpost to other services or progress a referral to district early help services.

- 2.14 The front door continues to bed down having been re-modelled in March/April of this year. It is right that we ensure that there is sufficient capacity including management capacity for it to operate effectively. It has been agreed that some additional manager capacity at group manager level be put in place to support consistent decision making while the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough aspects of the Integrated Front Door continue to bed down.
- 2.15 It is hoped that this will help to reduce the amount of work flowing into the units as more children are appropriately stepped across to early help or signposted to other services.
- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 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.

Source Documents	Location
None	