

CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	25/01/2024
REPORT OF	Laura Snell (Service Manager) & Adele Harty (Head of Service)
SUBJECT	The Integrated Front Door improvement journey
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

Improving our responses and services to children and families at the start of their journey, ensuring right person, right service, right time. Feeding directly into the overall council plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There has been considerable further change within the Integrated Front Door (IFD) since the last report was produced and positive progress continues to be made. Since the last report was produced, the IFD have also been subject to an Ofsted monitoring visit, of which highlights the progress made, alongside there still being an ongoing need for further transformation.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

This report seeks to update the scrutiny panel members on the IFD's improvement journey, and the changes made since the last report.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 The populations at the integrated Front Door have remained consistent over the last quarter with a slight increase in safeguarding referrals in December 2023 which is a usual seasonal theme. The primary issue being Domestic Abuse.
- 1.2 Since the last report, the IFD have been subject of an Ofsted monitoring visit in May 2023. This visit was well received, with positive feedback offered, however highlighted areas for further development, which the service are continuing to address.
- 1.3 Throughout September there were three launch sessions held with partners, led by Laura Snell and Rachel Cross (Team Around the Family (TAF) Lead), reaching over 250 partners. These sessions outlined the role of the TAF team, the use of the revised Early Help Assessment, the revised collaborative Early Help Assessment (EHA) and the changes being implemented in October 2023, with respect of how to make a safeguarding referral for children, ahead of the removal of the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF).

- 1.4 In October 2023, the MARF was removed from circulation, with all referrals (except for a small number of agencies Police, GP, A&E and CAF/CASS) for children now being made via the telephone, through our team of specialist Business Support Specialists.
- 1.5 The consultation line has been strengthened, along with the responses given to partners who seek to utilise this support.
- 1.6 Work remains ongoing to strengthen our relationships and work with key partner agencies, such as Diana Princess of Wales hospital, Humberside Police, and housing.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 If changes had not been made to the IFD, there would continue to have been a disproportionate number of children progressing into local authority and statutory services. Progress is ongoing in this area to ensure a proportionate and appropriate response for all children and the timeliness of response to children and families continues to improve.
- 2.2 Work with the partnership and on strengthening the referral process was required, as without this the IFD would have continued to receive poor quality referrals, making robust, safe decisions for children more difficult and delayed. There is work ongoing to strengthen this even further and holistic ensure partner information informs decisions and outcomes for children.
- 2.3 When revising the Early help assessment and strategy and revised referral route to the IFD, there was a real appetite from partners to get on board and this supported with a collaborative approach and a chance to reach partners and revise practice. A large proportion of referrals are from Local Authority services where children step up into statutory services, there is an opportunity to understand the connectivity with early help, target family support and social work to support risk and need being managed proportionately and ensure reflection and entry points are robust.
- 2.4 There is an opportunity to enhance the role and function of the call centre to strengthen the pathways to families receiving help early alongside timely decisions where immediate safeguarding is required.
- 2.5 The PITSTOP is well attended by partner agencies and appropriate and proportionate information is shared timely. There has been an increase of 11% in police referrals over the last quarter and these now make up 44% of all referrals. The PIT STOP could be further strengthened to ensure partners with the best relationship with children, intervene early to prevent escalation to the front door. A refresh of the TOR is to be launched across the partnership

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 There remains a wider reputational risk to children's social care and North East Lincolnshire Council if changes are not sustained and children are left in situations of risk. The quality assurance and reflection points within this have been strengthened and there are plans in place to ensure further strengthen this

3.2 Communication channels remain open, and this continues to be supported during the transition in senior leadership.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 There remains significant financial pressure for North East Lincolnshire Council. There is a strong focus on building a stable, permanent workforce which will ensure consistency and quality of practice for children alongside a reduction in the costs of agency workers. Within the front door there is current one agency worker and the extended hours team is managed by an agency project team. The extended hours offer will be considered as part of the review of children's social care with a view to establishing a permanent workforce

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In May 2023, Ofsted found "the front door response to children in need of help and protection has improved since the last inspection."

5.2 Ofsted also found "since the last inspection, there have been improvements in workforce quality and processes in the IFD, leading to overall better management of demand." "When urgent contacts about children's risks and need are received and it is clear that they meet threshold for social care, they are screened quickly and efficiently."

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No change.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Currently the IFD do continue to have one Agency Social Worker to support with embedding changes and meeting demand and the extended hours service consists of a project team of agency social workers

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None currently.

9. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance, or physical assets). As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

10. WARD IMPLICATIONS

Implications for all wards.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

12. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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