

Equalities Monitoring – Services

B - Children's Social Care

Annual Report - 2020-21



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Introduction to Service Area

Children's Social Care (CSC) has a statutory responsibility for assessing the help and support needed for children and their families with specialist needs, including Child Protection, Children Looked After, Youth Offending and Special Educational Needs. It is also responsible for planning, developing and commissioning specialist services to meet changing needs. The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004 provide the legislative framework for Children's Social Care.

1. Equality Duty

2.1 Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

Explain how you have met this for your service area?

It is important to note that Children's Social Care provide support to children, young people and families within a clear statutory framework. Many of the service users who become subject to Social Care intervention do not actively seek to be engaged, rather Children's Social Care are required under legislation to ensure the safety of children in our locality. It is not a universal service which has open access to all members of the public, it is a specialist service, and therefore access to the service is based on clear criteria focused on ensuring the welfare of any child or young person is the priority of the service.

All children and their families are entitled to equal access to services which do not discriminate on the grounds of religion, ethnic origin, linguistic background, culture, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Children's Social Care records core demographic data about children whom we work with, both to be able to thematically understand the needs of children in the service, as well as being a part of how we develop and audit the delivery of culturally sensitive, religiously appropriate and anti-discriminatory approaches to individual children and families.

Delivery of these approaches is mainly through the direct work with children and their families delivered by our workforce and in 2020/21, staff attended training on the following training:

- Supporting young people with anxiety
- Supporting young people with low mood
- Autism Awareness
- Unconscious bias
- Gender Identity

What are the outcomes for specific groups?

Following a referral, Children's Social Care will undertake an assessment to help understand what strengths/difficulties the family are facing and to determine the help and support that can be offered.

The outcome will depend on the needs identified through assessment, but they fall into two main groupings:

- Urgent intervention: where it is identified that a child has high level or complex needs which requires an immediate and ongoing response, for example where a child is in need of protection.
- Specialist help: where it is identified that the welfare of the child will be significantly impaired without the provision of services, for example a child who is looked after, or a child who has severe disabilities.

Depending on the nature of concerns for children and the services delivered by the Council and a range of partners the desired outcomes for each child and family will be different and dynamic. Therefore for the purposes of this report in articulating 'outcomes' flat comparisons across and between protected characteristics is not necessarily an effective benchmark of equality.

Positively, recent inspection findings outlined that the service was delivering effective services for children, especially through the COVID-19 Pandemic, including specific reference to disabled children stating that Corporate leaders within the council had been well sighted on the progress of children, including disabled children, during the series of national lockdowns in 2020/21. This is especially important given the often disproportionate impact that COVID-19 and lockdowns had on disabled children and their families, when compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

Access to services - what are the gaps/ who is and isn't using the service?

Access to Children's Social Care is based on a statutory threshold, however we continually aim to ensure people are treated fairly and that those who are most in need receive the greatest help. As a department we work towards ensuring children and families with the greatest assessed need receive a service in a timely way. There are occasions where the law says Children's Social Care must get involved with a family even if the family do not want this, and our practitioners will strive to treat all people coming into contact with our service with dignity and respect.

Children's Social Care have a broad range of referral partners, including Education, Health and Policing as well as accepting referrals from members of the community and families themselves. This range of referrers means we have significant reach into the local community and that anyone who believes a child is in need of support or in need of protection from harm can make a referral. Where a child is in need of support, this referral should be made with parental consent however we do not hold information about the numbers of families who do not give that consent (as the referral is never received). Where it is suspected that a child is in need of protection, consent to make a referral is not needed. We have provided data in this report about the numbers of referrals received into the service based on specific characteristics.

Referrals by Age (2020/21)

The table below shows the highest % referrals of Children in Need in the duration April 2020 to March 2021 is age 10 – 15, the pattern of referrals by age can vary from year to year, although this remains the same as previous three years. Due to social workers often engaging with older children and adolescents, specific attention has been given this year to the engagement and direct work skills of staff for younger children, to ensure that they receive an equality of service and response.

Children in Need (CIN) - % referrals by age group			
Age Groups	% Referrals	% Bracknell Forest population (0 - 17 years)¹	Variance (pp)
Unborn	5.5%	-	5.5
Under 1	4.7%	4.8%	-0.1
1 – 4	17.7%	20.5%	-2.8
5 – 9	25.3%	28.2%	-2.9
10 – 15	36.4%	35.5%	0.9
16+	10.4%	11.0%	0.6

Referrals by Sex (2020/21)

The table below shows the sex of referrals for Children in Need in the duration April 2020 to March 2021. It shows that in this period a slightly higher proportion of referrals for females were received. This pattern of referral by sex can vary from year to year. *There is no statistical significance in the variance against the Bracknell Forest population (0-17 years). This data shows that professional safeguarding partners, community members and families are just as likely to identify boys as well as girls as needing a referral for care and protection via Children’s Services, which is a significant positive indicator.*

Children in Need (CIN) - % referrals by sex			
Sex	% Referrals (exc. 'not known')	% Bracknell Forest population (0 - 17 years)¹	Variance
Female	49.2%	48.5%	0.7
Male	50.8%	51.5%	-0.7

Referrals by Race (2020/21)

The table below shows the race of referrals of Children in Need in the duration April 2020 to March 2021. It shows the referrals are largely in line with or below the Bracknell Forest population (0-17 years) and there has been no significant change on previous year data. *It should be noted that this is a needs led service and there is no statistical significance in the variance shown, however the data does show that the percentage of children referred to Children’s Social Care, when reported on by ethnicity, shows neither over nor under representation of children in comparison to the locality population. We can view this as positive reflection of the reach our referral partners have into different communities, and the role of CSC and the Safeguarding*

¹ 2020 Population Estimates Unit, ONS

Partnership to effectively raise awareness of the reasons why children should be referred to Social Care, and that all children have a right to safety and protection, regardless of race and ethnicity.

Children in Need (CIN) - % referrals by race			
Race	% Referrals (exc. 'not given')	% Bracknell Forest population (0 - 17 years)²	Variance
White	83.0%	86.6%	-3.6
Mixed	7.3%	4.5%	2.8
Asian	5.0%	6.0%	-1.0
Black	4.0%	2.5%	1.5
Other	0.7%	0.4%	0.3

Single Assessments by age, sex and race

Single assessments completed by Age (2020/21)

Single (or continuous) assessments were introduced in Bracknell Forest with effect from 1st May 2013 and are now the way in which Social Workers gather information regarding the circumstances of a child or young person to help determine what action or support will be offered to the child, young person or family.

All single assessments **completed** in the duration April 2020 to March 2021, by age, are broadly in line with the % of referrals completed. *It should be noted that not all referrals made to Children's Social Care will result in a single assessment.*

Children in Need (CIN) - % Single assessments completed by age group			
Age Groups	% Single Assessments completed	% Referrals	Variance
Unborn	4.8%	5.5%	-0.7
Under 1	4.4%	4.7%	-0.3
1 – 4	16.9%	17.7%	-0.8
5 – 9	24.2%	25.3%	-1.1
10 – 15	37.6%	36.4%	1.2
16+	12.2%	10.4%	1.8

² Population data taken from NOMIS (DC2101EW) Census 2011

Single assessments completed by Sex (2020/21)

All single assessments **completed** in the duration April 2020 to March 2021, by sex, are in line with the % of referrals completed. *It should be noted that not all referrals made to Children's Social Care will result in a single assessment.*

Children in Need (CIN) - % Single Assessments completed by Sex			
Sex	% Single Assessments completed (exc. 'not known')	% Referrals (exc. 'not known')	Variance
Female	49.1%	48.5%	0.6
Male	50.7%	51.5%	-0.8

Single assessments completed by Race (2020/21)

All single assessments **completed** in the duration April 2020 to March 2021, by race, are broadly in line with the % of referrals completed. *It should be noted that not all referrals made to Children's Social Care will result in a single assessment.*

Children in Need - % Single assessments completed by Race			
Race	% Assessments (exc. 'not given')	% Referrals (exc. 'not given')	Variance
White	82.9%	83.0%	-0.1
Mixed	7.4%	7.0%	0.4
Asian	4.7%	5.0%	-0.3
Black	4.1%	4.0%	0.1
Other	0.9%	0.7%	0.2

Legal status of Children Looked After by sex and race

Legal Status of Children Looked After by sex and race (as at 31/03/21)

Children who become looked after by the local authority are classified by their legal status which ranges from being Looked After on a Full Care Order [issued by the Courts] or being Looked After on a Voluntary basis [with Parental consent].

The table below shows the category of C2 [Full Care Orders] is the highest category of children who are Looked After at 31st March 2021 and this shows a similar picture between male and female.

SSDA903 return - % Legal Status by Sex			
Sex	Female	Male	All CLA
C1 – Interim Care Orders	10.6%	8.8%	9.6%

C2 – Full Care Orders	65.2%	68.8%	67.1%
E1 – Placement orders	3.0%	3.8%	3.4%
V2 – Section 20	21.2%	18.8%	19.9%
Total in each group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

NB: It is important to note that numbers are small and therefore need to be viewed with caution.

The table below shows that of the proportion of Children Looked After by legal status by race, those classified as BME groups is comparable to those classified as White. It should be noted that whilst it may appear that the BME group have a higher representation this is because of small numbers in the cohort which when represented as a percentage appear greater.

SSDA903 return - % Legal Status by Race			
Race	White (inc. White Irish and White Other)	Black & Minority Ethnic groups*	All CLA
C1 – Interim Care Orders	8.3%	15.4%	9.6%
C2 – Full Care Orders	70.0%	53.8%	67.1%
E1 – Placement orders	3.3%	3.8%	3.4%
V2 – Section 20	18.3%	26.9%	19.9%
Total in group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Due to small numbers of BME children the percentage can be high and therefore should be viewed with caution.

Type of placement for Children Looked After by age, sex and race

Type of Placement for Children Looked After by Age

It is important to note that when a decision is made that a child or young person becomes Looked After every effort is made to ensure the child or young person is placed in the most appropriate environment to meet his or her needs. For some children and young people it may be in their interests to be placed out of the area; some may require more specialist support, which may only be available out of the area. In all cases there is careful consideration given to matching the needs of the child or young person to the right kind of placement, including ensuring that any needs arising from race, sex, religion etc. can be met appropriately.

The tables below show the placement pattern by age, race and sex:

SSDA903 return - Placement Type of Children Looked After - by Age					
Placement Type:	as % of each age group				as % of all Children Looked After
	Under 5	5 – 9	10 - 15	16 - 17	Total
Foster placement with relative or friend:					

Inside local authority	15.8%	5.3%	7.7%	4.7%	7.5%
Outside local authority	5.3%	-	1.5%	-	1.4%
Placement with other foster carer:					
Inside the Local Authority	52.6%	36.8%	36.9%	20.9%	34.2%
Outside the Local Authority	5.3%	31.6%	32.3%	14.0%	23.3%
Semi-independent (not subject to Children's Home Regulations)	-	-	-	37.2%	11.0%
Homes and Hostels	-	-	16.9%	16.3%	12.3%
Parents	5.3%	26.3%	3.1%	4.7%	6.8%
Other placements	15.8%	-	1.5%	2.3%	3.4%
Total in each age group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

NB: It is important to note that numbers are small and therefore need to be viewed with caution.

Type of Placement for Children Looked After by Sex

SSDA 903 return – Placement Type of Children Looked After – by Sex			
Placement type	% by placement type by Sex		
	Female	Male	All CLA
Foster placement with relative or friend:			
Inside local authority	7.6%	7.5%	7.5%
Outside local authority	1.5%	1.3%	1.4%
Placement with other foster carer:			
Inside local authority	34.8%	33.8%	34.2%
Outside local authority	18.2%	27.5%	23.3%
Semi-independent (not subject to Children's Home Regulations)	10.6%	11.3%	11.0%
Homes and Hostels	12.1%	12.5%	12.3%
Parents	13.6%	1.3%	6.7%
Other placements	1.5%	5.0%	3.4%
Total in group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

NB: It is important to note that numbers are small and therefore need to be viewed with caution.

Type of Placement for Children Looked After by Race

SSDA903 return – Placement Type of Children Looked After – by Race			
Placement type	% of White (inc. White Irish & White Other)	% of Black & Minority Ethnic Groups *	All CLA
Foster placement with relative or friend:			
Inside local authority	6.7%	11.5%	7.5%

Outside local authority	1.7%	-	1.4%
Placement with other foster carer:			
Inside Local Authority	36.7%	23.1%	34.2%
Outside Local Authority	24.2%	19.2%	23.3%
Semi-independent (not subject to Children's Home Regulations)	9.2%	19.2%	11.0%
Homes and Hostels	10.8%	19.2%	12.3%
Parents	7.5%	3.8%	6.8%
Other placements	3.3%	3.8%	3.4%
Total in group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Due to small numbers of BME children the percentages can be high and therefore should be viewed with caution.*

I. Detail the actions to address any gaps identified in the future?

The data provided does not necessarily show indication of inequalities or discrimination and it may be more useful to use alternative data for 21/22 to highlight if there are over or under representations of children with specific protected characteristics being placed in specific contexts or under different legal arrangements to be able to better track this year on year, if recording systems will allow.

2.2 Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

I. **Explain how you have met or are aiming to meet this for your service area in the future?**

During this year, CSC have increased opportunities for learning and development for the whole workforce to both deepen the understanding of different cultures and develop skills in building meaningful relationships with people from various cultural backgrounds and identities.

In addition, CSC developed and launched its Equality and Diversity Protocol in November 2020. The protocol recognises CSC's responsibilities and duties set out under the Equality Act 2010 and sets out expectations of employees to strive for inclusiveness.

A themed audit was undertaken in October 2020, to review the impact of our work with children and younger people who are Looked After and who are from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background. Whilst the review found that for the majority of children and young people, their culture and identity needs are being met, as a result of the audit an action plan was developed to ensure that an "identity first" culture is embedded throughout the service.

II. What are the gaps and the actions to address these in the future?

Recent audit activity has identified that staff need to be more consistent in recording Core Demographic data for children and families on file. This will help us to continue to understand the needs of children and families we are supporting and to develop our approaches.

2.3 Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

- I. Explain how you have met or are aiming to meet this for your service area in the future?

Our workforce are all adults and majority white British female and as such as have developed a series of development opportunities to promote cohesion in our workforce and to better be able to deliver appropriate services to the community:

- Learning seminars
- Reflective Case Discussions
- Trans Awareness / Mermaids Talk

- II. What are the gaps and the actions identified to address these in the future?
Learning Organisation – any plans for next 6 months of delivery?

As a service, Children's Social Care continue to ensure that an "identity first" approach to supporting children and families is embedded across the service. For example, audit activity has enabled areas of improvement to be identified in relation to cultural needs; this is an area that will continue to develop through the delivery of further training.

Further developments in the next 6 months of delivery include:

- "All About Me" training and policy development, to enable all children and young people who we support to make sense of their journey
- Targeted audit activity in relation to other protected characteristics including disability.
- Adaptation of recording tools, forms and templates to further embed the "identity first" approach, including in supervisions.

Conclusion

During 2020/21, Children's Social Care have continued to deliver a service that is fair and equitable for all. Whilst entry to the service is based on statutory threshold criteria and is therefore only based on identified levels of need, people who use the service are supported to express their individuality and to follow their preferred lifestyle.

The data collated in this report regarding referrals, when reported on by age, sex and ethnicity, shows neither over nor under representation of children in comparison to the locality population. We can view this as positive reflection of the reach our referral partners have into different communities, and the role of CSC and the Safeguarding Partnership to effectively raise awareness of the reasons why children should be referred to Social Care, and that all children have a right to safety and protection.

The development of the CSC Equality and Diversity protocol ensures that there is a commitment from the whole service to protecting people's human rights, and to treat everyone fairly and with respect and dignity. With this, a programme of training to improve awareness and understanding of diverse backgrounds has successfully enabled staff to embed the 'identity first' approach, which will be supported by future developments of our recording tools and templates.