

**REPORT THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE, COMMUNICATIONS AND
PARTNERSHIPS**

**WORKING GROUP INTO CHILDREN SOCIAL CARE FRONT DOOR -
FEEDBACK**

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider feedback from the Working Group's meeting into the operation of the children's social care front door.

2. Background

- 2.1 In setting its work programme for the year, the Committee agreed to establish a working group to look at the operation of the children's social care front door.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 On 21 November 2019, members of the Working Group visited the Sandhill Centre. The members in attendance included Cllr Pat Smith, Cllr Paula Hunt, Cllr Karen Wood, Cllr Phil Tye and Cllr Pam Mann. Also, in attendance were Jill Colbert Lisa Briggs, Majella Tallack, Paula Steel, Paul Moffat and Jason Bennet.
- 3.2 The meeting involved a discussion around the operation of the front door of the children's social care system and a demonstration of the Liquid Logic system. The following issues were raised: -
- Members looked at the various stages and processes of the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which had recently been introduced to improve the front door of the service (a diagram setting out the process is attached). The MASH provides a single point of contact for all safeguarding concerns regarding children and young people. A central feature of the MASH is that it provides an opportunity to make the most of partners expertise when a case first presents itself to the front door – whether by phone call email or referral from a partner organisation. It was noted that the system operated at 3 different levels and that all contacts were Rag Rated (Red/Amber/Green).
 - The service was seeing a high number of contacts at the front door – estimated at around 13,500 over the last 6 months. Over 59% of these are passed on from the Police. These can be varied in nature and 32% of these are converted to a referral. This means that a lot of time and effort is spent processing referrals. All emergency cases are acted on immediately.

- The new process allows advice and support to be drawn from a wide range of partners to ensure that a fully informed decision can be made. Partners include the police, schools, health and mental health and domestic abuse specialists. MASH meetings are held on line to allow for a speedy decision to be made.
- The criteria for deciding if a case is Red/Green/Amber is contained in a threshold document which is shared with partners and is available on line. The correct assessment of a referral is a key part of the operation of the front door.
- Concerns have previously been raised by Ofsted over the way decisions are evidenced. There have also been concerns over the number of referrals being made by the Police and the quality of the information provided by them. It is felt that systems were now in place to ensure that all decision-making processes are fully documented, and case history fully accounted for. Work is going on with partners including the police to ensure that they follow the criteria set out in the threshold document and that cases are dealt with at the correct level. This involves developing a common understanding of the criteria and processes set out in the threshold document.
- Members were provided with a demonstration of the Liquid Logic system and examined several case studies. Though there had been delays in its introduction, it was felt that the Liquid Logic system was now operating successfully and was improving the decision-making process. It also allowed for better management supervision of cases and quality assurance.
- Two new members of staff had been appointed to provide training and support for staff operating the Liquid Logic system. It was noted that Liquid Logic was widely used in the UK and that new staff joining the TfC usually had experience in its use. Otherwise training and support was available.
- It was noted that at this stage there was no client portal but this option would be examined once the new system had been established.
- In the event of a major IT failure, extensive business continuity measures were in place to allow the front door to continue to operate.
- It was noted that links between TfC and schools were continuing to be developed and it was pleasing that schools were choosing to buy in additional services from TfC.

- In conclusion, Members suggested that it would be useful to have the opportunity to speak with staff operating at the Front Door and meet with partner organisations such as the police in order to obtain their views on the system.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 That the Committee consider the feedback report of the Working Group.

5. Glossary

None

6 Background Papers

None