

Report to Scrutiny Board

Name of Scrutiny Board	Children and Young People's Scrutiny Board
Meeting Date	8th June 2022
Subject	Quarterly report detailing caseloads, vacancy rates, the use of agency Social Workers, and numbers of Children in Need, Children on a Child Protection Plan and Children Looked After
Wards Affected	All
Report of	Louise Ambler, Principal Social Worker

Why is it coming here?
This paper provides intelligence to the Children's Scrutiny Board on the caseload allocations and staffing within the children's social work teams. This has been requested by Scrutiny to ensure that caseloads remain manageable to allow good quality services to be delivered to children and their families in the Borough.

What are the key points?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report sets out the overview of staffing numbers, caseloads and service demands to enable ongoing oversight of these crucial aspects of social care activity. • Temporary employment of agency staff, pending recruitment to permanent positions, is used to maintain manageable caseloads.

Possible courses of action
To consider the detail in the report to assure members that the children's social work service have manageable caseloads.

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Should this report be exempt?
No

Report to Scrutiny Board

1. Background

- 1.1. Members have requested that a report be provided on a four monthly basis detailing the caseloads, vacancy rates and use of agency social workers to provide oversight of activity, need and demand.

2. Main Issues for Scrutiny

If consultation applies, please include within this section.

2.1 Social Work vacancies and use of agency staff

- 2.1.1 To ensure that the Council has an established and permanent children's social work workforce there is ongoing recruitment. Different approaches continue to be used including use of social media, Indeed and the Social Work Matters website, in addition to Calderdale's job site.
- 2.1.2 The national picture in terms of recruitment and retention of social workers remains extremely challenging and this issue is regularly raised with DfE colleagues and across professional networks.
- 2.1.3 In response to these challenges, a working group has been established. The working group will review our retention and recruitment strategy and action plan in collaboration with colleagues in Adults Social Care. The Yorkshire Urban Rural Teaching Partnership, of which Calderdale is a partner, also held a series of workshops around recruitment, retention and succession planning earlier in the year and an action plan was drawn up following this, which will feed into the working group.
- 2.1.4 Students on placement in the borough continue to be attracted to newly qualified posts available in the authority. 10 positions in the social work locality teams have been offered to current final year students and they should start between July and September 2022.
- 2.1.5 The service continues to offer retention payments. The role of Advanced Practitioner continues to provide a means of encouraging and retaining experienced staff.
- 2.1.6 Two members of staff are currently on placement within Adults Social Care whilst undertaking a Masters qualification through the 'Step Up' programme. The aim is for them to undertake their final placement within Children's and become part of the children's workforce.
- 2.1.7 Two Apprentice Social Workers in children's are due to finish their three years courses this summer and both have been offered newly qualified positions. There are a further 2 apprentices in a second cohort.

2.1.8 A number of children's social work teams now have a permanent office base at the old Customer First building on Horton Street and work from there several times a week on a rota basis. This has been very positive in terms of supporting staff wellbeing, team morale and systemic practice.

2.1.9 As of 4th May, staffing figures were as follows:

Disabled Children's Team: This team consists of a Team Manager, Practice Manager and 6 social workers within a wider, multi-disciplinary all-age team. There is one part-time social worker on maternity leave currently and there are 2 social work vacancies. The team is finding it hard to recruit to these vacant posts.

MAST: The staffing complement is 1 Team Manager, 4 Practice Managers, 7 Social Workers. There are 3.7 Social Worker posts vacant currently and 2 agency Social Workers covering these.

Children's Assessment Team (CAT): CAT staff complement is 1 Team Manager, 4 Practice Managers, 3 Advanced Practitioners and 20 Social Workers. CAT is currently carrying 7 Social Work vacancies and 1 Advanced Practitioner is on secondment. The team has 1 Social Worker on maternity leave and 1 long-term sick. The vacant posts are covered by 5 agency workers. 1 newly qualified Social Worker has been appointed but will not start until July/August 2022. There is an ongoing advertisement, but applications have been disappointing.

Child Exploitation Team: There are 2 x Social Work posts in this team. There is 1 vacancy and despite a rolling advert, the response has been extremely poor, and we have not been able to recruit. The second Social Worker remains on maternity leave. An agency Social Worker was recruited but has been given notice. In order to achieve some stability, we are considering placing a CAT Social Worker in the team. The vacant Team Manager post has been successfully recruited to and this person will commence in the next few weeks. The 2 Project Workers continue to support the lower level/ development work of this team.

Locality teams: There are currently 8 Social Work vacancies with 2 x agency Social Workers covering these roles across the three Locality Teams. 2 additional agency Social Workers are being sought but this is proving difficult due to a national shortage.

There remains an open recruitment process and offers to 10 students for permanent positions have been made, following recent interviews. If accepted these newly qualified workers would start between July and September this year.

One Advanced Practitioner is on maternity leave until February 2023, two Practice Managers are on maternity leave until October 2022 and March 2023, and two social workers are also on maternity leave across the three teams.

Emergency Duty Team (EDT): The staffing complement is 1 part-time Team Manager and 5 ½ Specialist Practitioners. There is a 0.5 social work post vacant within this team currently.

Fostering: There are 2 agency Social Workers in the permanence pod. An advert is currently out for 1 additional agency Social Worker and 1 agency Practice Manager. This is to cover 4 vacancies which have been advertised on multiple occasions, but no appointable candidates have yet been identified. There is 1 Social Worker who is

temporarily on other duties and 0.5 FTE maternity vacancy. Resignations have also been received by 1 Practice Manager due to leave on 13th June 2022 and 1 FTE Social worker due to leave on 25th May, however this post will be filled when the Social Worker (0.5) on maternity leave returns in September.

Pathways 18+: This team consists of 6 Pathway Advisors, 1 Participation and Enrichment Advisor, 1 Practice Manager and 1 Team Manager. Since the last report, the Participation and Enrichment Advisor has started in post, as has the new Practice Manager. A new Team Manager has been appointed and is due to start on 16th May.

2.2 Cases by plan

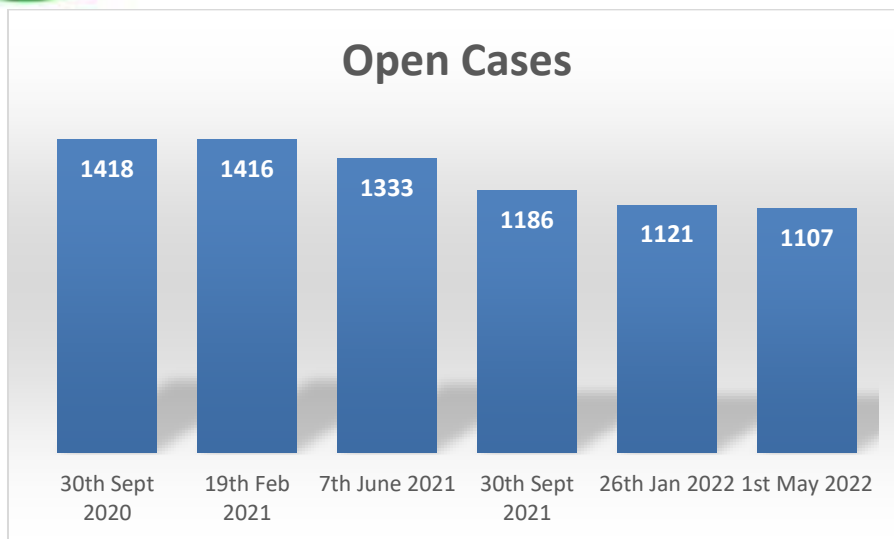
2.2.1 The data in **Table 1** shows the number of plans over time, by type and includes the total number of all cases open* see below definition.

Table 1

Number	30 th Sep 2020	19 th Feb 2021	7 th June 2021	30 th Sept 2021	26 th Jan 2022	1 st May 2022
Total number of Open Cases*	1418	1416	1333	1186	1121	1107
Children in Need Plans	270	245	222	241	232	233
Child Protection Plans	265	207	175	179	181	182
Children Looked After	334	344	347	348	346	342
Receiving a Leaving Care Service						199

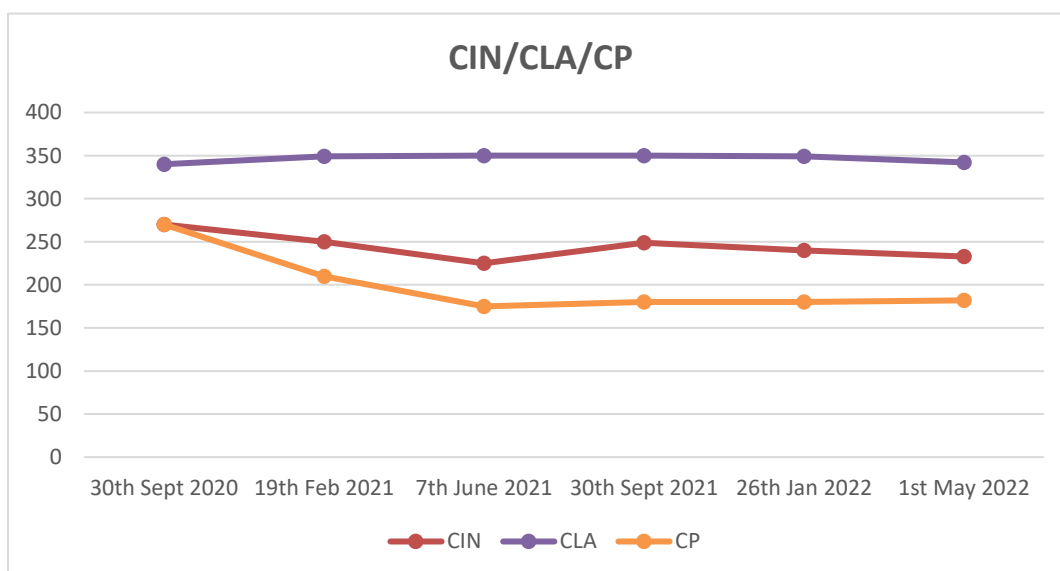
2.2.2 **Graph 1** shows all Open Cases* which includes not only, Child Protection (CP), Children who are looked after (CLA) and Children in Need (C/N) but also the total number of open assessments and those receiving Care Leaving services post 18.

Graph 1 Open Cases



2.2.3 The number of open cases in Children's Social Care has continued to decline since February 2021. This may have been influenced by: i) changes within the Pathways service presenting the opportunity to better identify care leavers over 21 not requiring a service and ii) the impact of the Early Help Hub at the front door in diverting cases and/or reducing their time open to CSC. This continues to reflect the reduction seen through the similar timeframe of children with CIN or CP plans.

2.2.4 Graph 2: Numbers of plans



2.2.5 The numbers of children on child in need plans have remained relatively stable over the last 12 months.

2.2.6 The numbers of children on child protection plans are also shown to have remained relatively stable over the last 12 months overall. It is the service view that work started before the covid pandemic to reduce the number of Child Protection plans

and not use them to 'monitor' situations has continued as we have emerged from the pandemic. However, for the last year, the work undertaken by social work teams and the IRO service to keep Child Protection plans specifically for children at risk of significant harm has stabilised the numbers and appears to reflect a 'new norm'. It also places Calderdale in line with its statistical neighbours.

2.2.7 Numbers of children who are looked after have also been relatively stable with a slight reduction in recent months. It is hypothesised that these numbers will reduce further in coming months due to the improved Special Guardianship offer, including some financial continuity for foster carers moving to Special Guardianship roles. Also, the successful use of Pre-Proceedings (Public Law Outline) to avoid the need for care proceedings. A new reunification policy should gradually see a number of young people exiting care to return to the care of their parents, where assessed as safe to do so. There is also a national movement, being supported by the Courts and CAFCASS, to move away from the use of Placement with Parents regulations to support and monitor children's safety and welfare in the home. This will require something of a culture change in the region but should reduce the numbers of children being made subject to Interim Care Orders where Supervision Orders can be used as a more proportionate intervention. The effect would be a more efficient use of our resources.

2.3 Caseloads

2.3.1 There is an intention to cap caseloads at 23 cases per Social Worker and 15 for newly qualified Social Workers (NQSW). Caseloads are closely monitored by Service Managers and if caseloads exceed the cap, action is taken immediately to understand why and to take appropriate action including re-allocation where necessary. Cases held by NQSWs are less complex or jointly worked with a more experienced Social Worker.

2.3.2 The calculation of the average caseload for a full time equivalent Social Worker is made using the number of cases held by the team and the number of full time equivalent social workers holding cases.

2.3.3 **Table 2** illustrates that as of 4th May 2022, Social Worker caseloads in all teams are within the limit expected as 'good practice'.

Team	Caseload 31.12.19	Caseload 30.4.2020	Caseload 30.9.2020	Caseload 31.1.2021	Caseload 7.6.2021	Caseload 30.9.21	Caseload 31.1.2022	Caseload 4.5.22
Children's Assessment Team	18	12	11.6	17.7	17.5	12	17.1	13.5
Child Exploitation Team:	14	12	9	15	15	6	0 *	12
Disabled Children's Team	15	15	18.5	18.8	22	14.4	18	13.8
Central and West and	22	13	17.6	20	16	16.3	19	18.2

Upper Valley								
North and East and Lower Valley	22	21	20.3	16.5	17.5	15.7	17.7	17
Children Looked After	16	14	17.9	17	18.5	17	18.5	15.5

3. Further Action/Timescales

- 3.1 The next report will detail the outcome of the working group on recruitment and retention.

4. Options Appraisal

- 4.1 There are no options to consider.

5. Climate Change

What implications does this issue have on the Council's goals to tackle the Climate Emergency?

- 5.1 A number of meetings continue to take place virtually, where safe and appropriate to do so, reducing the number of unnecessary journeys being made. Working from home, using dual screens has reduced the practice of printing documents.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Demand for services and numbers of Children in Need, Child Protection and those who need to be looked after are scrutinised on a weekly basis by the senior leadership team. This ensures the staffing levels within the teams can meet the needs of the children and staff are able to work effectively and systemically.
- 6.2 In spite of a challenging picture in terms of recruitment and retention of staff, both locally and nationally, the caseloads and numbers of Child in Need, Child Protection and Children Looked After Plans remain stable and there is some indication that Looked After numbers will continue to reduce in coming months.
- 6.3 Regular work is undertaken through data analysis and audit to consider fluctuating demand and to understand the context to the numbers. This is also linked to work to improve and strengthen processes and systems which is now starting to embed post-pandemic.

7. Appendices & Background Documents

Please list any supporting documents and reference where they can be found or requested from.

None