

Trust Board Briefing Paper	
Reference Number:	TB144/12/J
Date of Meeting:	23.6.22
Presenting Director:	Maura Dargan
Subject:	DSF report PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ASSURANCE REPORT - For Year end 31 March 2022
Purpose: Approval/Noting	For Approval
Background:	Yearly performance management and assurance report submitted to SPPG, outlining the Trust's responsibilities for exercising, on behalf of the Department, the statutory functions which are delegated by virtue of authorisations made under the health and personal social services (Northern Ireland) order 1994 (the 1994 HPSS order).
Body of Paper (insert own heading, etc):	
Executive Summary 1.1 Exec Director of Social Work Statement of the Governance arrangements in place for safe and effective social work and social care services across the Trust Social work services occupy a unique position in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust by virtue of the range of statutory powers and duties, which direct and inform the provision of services in both Children's and Adult Programmes of Care. During this reporting period the Trust has maintained its responsibilities for exercising, on behalf of the Department, the statutory functions which are delegated by virtue of authorisations made under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (the 1994 HPSS Order). The Trust has also continued to meet its statutory obligation to put and keep in place arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of social work services, which it provides to individuals and the environment in which it provides them. Accountability is a key element in the Trust's discharge of DSFs. The Executive Director of Social Work presents twice yearly to Trust Board regarding the Annual and Interim Statutory Function reports this includes the 6 monthly Corporate Parenting Reports. It is the Executive Director of Social Work and Assistant Director of Social Work Governance responsibility to provide professional Leadership and to ensure the maintenance of professional Standards and regulatory issues pertaining to the delegated statutory function, I can confirm there are mechanisms in place within each division to assure that this is the case. The Trust has a Social Care Governance meeting that meets 8 times per annually, specifically focusing on the Social Work Workforce and on the delivery of Social Work Services. The Executive Director of Social Work chairs this meeting and areas of development, improvement and risk relating to delegated statutory functions are	

progressed in this forum.

A number of emerging pressures and risks associated with delegated statutory functions have arisen during this reporting period; a process has been further developed to escalate and address these matters through the Trusts integrated assurance framework. Emerging pressures and risks associated with statutory functions are reported directly into the Trust's Standard's and Compliance Committee, the Executive Director of Social Work and Assistant Director of Social Work Governance are members of this committee. Highlights are then progressed into the Trust's Risk and Assurance Group, which is the mechanism for preparing and delivering information to the Trust Assurance Committee and Trust Board. Consequently all emerging pressures and risks associated with the delivery of statutory functions continue to be presented throughout the Trust's Integrated Assurance Framework and shared with Executive Directors, Operational Directors and Non-Executive Directors.

Throughout this reporting period, I am satisfied that the delegated statutory functions are properly implemented and managed within all programmes of care. This includes ensuring:

- Legal and professional responsibilities are assigned and necessary systems and procedures are in place
- Compliance with all statutory, regulatory and professional requirements
- All staff responsible for the discharge of DSFs have access to relevant training, professional support and supervision
- The maintenance and operation of an efficient data collection system and provision of data and reports to the Department as required
- When statutory functions are impacted there are implementation of actions, including improvement plans, to improve the safety, quality and effectiveness of social work services
- The Department is informed, at agreed intervals, on the Trust's performance in respect of DSFs, including early notification of risks, resource pressures, legal challenges, and proposed actions to address
- Timely action is taken to address and/or prevent the escalation of any identified issues that affect our ability to deliver statutory functions.

1.2 Statement of the Executive Director of Social Work's assessment of the Trust's performance in effectively and efficiently delivering directed delegated statutory functions during the reporting period

There are a number of emerging pressures and risks associated with the delivery of our statutory functions. These areas are listed below in section 1.4, actions taken to control / mitigate risk and maintain professional assurances in each of these areas are detailed at section 2.7.

A steady rise in the number of families in need of social work intervention, pressures on mental health services for children, and a rise in domestic violence, placement challenges, reduced domiciliary care capacity and poverty have all resulted in increased demand for

our social work services leading to the areas noted below in section 1.4 being detrimentally impacted.

Social Work Workforce issues in Health & Social Care have been reported in Delegated Statutory Functions (DSF) reports since 2015. This Statutory Functions report highlights that social work staff shortages are having a significant impact on the Trusts ability to deliver statutory functions.

Frontline Social Work Teams continue to report increased pressures due to rising demand and complexity of need across all Social Work service areas.

In children's services workforce difficulties are reported in recruitment and retention, work is ongoing to strengthen the supply, recruitment and retention of social workers with the objective of meeting the needs of the workforce and securing a stable workforce to deliver safe, high quality social work services. Reducing unnecessary or unmanaged turnover and stabilising the workforce is critical to improving outcomes for staff and making safe staffing an active priority. The Trust continues to progress work on normative caseloads and has implemented a trust wide social work transfer scheme to improve retention and develop new way of supporting staff who wish to work in a different programme of care and/ or work location.

Without further external supply we continue to move social work staff around the system. We have placed an increased focus on retaining experienced social workers to help address the current supply challenges, and to retain knowledge, skills and expertise within the profession. Work is ongoing to consider how we also help to address specific retention challenges that are reported within front line children's services, such as consideration of a new skill mix in FSIT and development of hybrid admin / support functions.

There continues to be major gaps between supply and demand and this has prompted the development of a range of initiatives within Trust to increase supply and improve retention, such as increased university places and a pilot to offer more employment based options via the Open University.

Caseload pressures including caseload size and complexity as well as rising numbers of unallocated cases have impacted on service delivery. In addition, the rising numbers of looked after children, and placement shortages across the spectrum i.e. fostering / residential care remain a source of significant pressures for Social Work services in Woman Children's and Families. The Trust has taken a number of steps to address the impact these pressure areas have on the delivery of our statutory functions, as outlined in section 1.5 of the Executive summary and section 2.1b of the Family and Childcare narrative.

Concerns have been raised by the judiciary regarding delays linked to staff turnover in children's services and there have been increases in waiting lists for parenting capacity assessments in family centres.

There are reports, on increasing levels of domestic violence, child abuse, social isolation, mental health difficulties and rising levels of poverty and deprivation, which now require additional social work intervention and impact on our current caseloads within Woman Children's and Families.

Urgent work is being undertaken to reduce the number of unallocated cases and outstanding reviews, across all programmes to provide greater levels of support for inexperienced staff, and enable social workers to spend time that is more direct with

families and service users.

Pressures on suitable placements for children and young people goes hand in hand with the increase in the number of children becoming looked after. We have seen an increase in the number of children and young people placed in unregulated accommodation, this has a direct result on the lack of suitable placements, creating a perfect storm for the social work workforce, meaning local teams are reliant on emergency bespoke arrangements which require increased staffing, monitoring and social work interventions.

During this reporting period the Trust has had 5 DHR cases and 2 CMR notifications (awaiting the final decision to be made at SBNI Board which will be held in June). The SW Management teams continue to use a systematic process for investigating and learning from these incidents. The key aim from this is to improve service user safety and reduce the risk of recurrence, not only within the reporting SW team, but across the Trust as a whole.

The Trust continues to operate a number of learning groups that are actively taking forward improvements within the following practice areas which connect to elements of our statutory functions:

- Think Family Approaches
- Sharing to Safeguarding Protocols
- Carer's Assessments
- Risk Assessments in Adult Services
- Domestic Violence Training
- Improved interagency working with PSNI
- Adult Protection
- Escalation processes for repeat MRAC & DV referrals

In order to improve assurance reporting the Assistant Director for Family Support and Children's Safeguarding and the Assistant Director for Social Work Governance have established a new process to share the recommendations and early learning across the organisation, whilst also escalating any risks or controls that require immediate implementation. The two teams prepare a quarterly learning report which is tabled at the trusts Patient Quality and Safety Network, the report is then escalated into the Trusts Safety and Care Quality Committee before being presented through to the Trust's Risk and Assurance Group which ultimately feeds Trust Assurance Committee and Trust Board.

1.3 Comment on the Trust's progress in delivering the 2019/2020 local DDSF Plan (further detail to be provided for each Programme of Care at Section 2.6)

During the previous reporting period a number of action plans were agreed between SPPG and The Northern Health and Social Care Trust Social Work Leads. I am pleased to report that the majority of actions have now been completed and closed at end year action plan meetings.

There are 4 areas that remain in amber status and will subsequently carry forward into this reporting period.

1. Learning Disability - Ongoing Resettlement of service users from Muckamore

Abbey Hospital to bespoke placements in community

The Trust has seen a significant reduction in the number of service users requiring resettlement plans. The Trust continues to update SPPG at agreed intervals, on the progress for those service users who have been unable to transition into a community placement.

2. Early Years - Outstanding Inspections.

These have reduced significantly during the reporting period and the service is confident that compliance will be reached in the coming months.

3. Fostering – Unregulated Placements

The Trust continues to implement an action plan to reduce numbers of unregulated placements within the fostering service.

4. Mental Health – The Trust is unable to meet demand for Mental Health inpatient beds.

A review of the Crisis and Home Treatment function within the Crisis Response Home Treatment Service has been completed. Work is ongoing to review discharge pathways and Facilitated Early Discharge within Home Treatment

1.4 Identify the areas where the Trust has not adequately discharged their statutory functions and the actions taken to address this (further detail to be provided for each Programme of Care at Section 2.7)

Areas of emerging pressures and risk associated with the delivery of statutory functions

Children in Need

- Challenges associated with FSIT & Gateway increased referral activity (Increase of 470 Children In Need Cases. An additional 328 children were referred for assessment compared to the previous reporting period. This excludes any pre-birth referrals.)
- Increase in the total no. of unallocated cases for FSIT & Gateway at year-end period. (167 Total Unallocated > 20 working days as at 31.03.22)

Children with a Disability

- *Number of children provided with a short break during the period who became Looked After by virtue of the short break arrangement. (Data 10.3.5)* The Trust has encountered a number of challenges during this reporting period on the delivery of short breaks for Children with a Disability. (a reduction of 119 short break episodes since the last reporting period).

Fostering

- Carried forward action – unregulated fostering placements. (63 placements remaining)

Looked after Children

- There is reduced occupancy at Sea Port View (65%)
- The number of looked after children awaiting assessment from the CAMHS has increased (increase of 17 children)
- The Trust has put a number of measures in place to support children with no named social worker. (increase of 97 children)
- Statutory visit cycle and statutory review cycles have been impacted by workforce challenges
- There has been an increase in the no. of unregulated placements throughout the reporting period.(increase of 4 placements)

CAMHS

- Due to difficulties, accessing bed based services at Beechcroft, the Trust was required to accommodate 3 Looked after Children/Young People in an adult setting throughout the reporting period and 5 young people who were not looked after, but open to the CAMHS community caseload.

Early Years

- Carried forward risk – outstanding inspections. These have reduced significantly during the reporting period and the service is confident that compliance will be reached in the coming months

Leaving Care

- The number of young people awaiting allocation of a personal adviser has increased during the reporting period (Increase of 12 young people)
- 1 young person died while in receipt of Trust After Care Services during the reporting period.

Mental Health Order

- Carried forward risk – The Trust is unable to meet demand for MH inpatient beds.

Carers and Direct Payments Act

- Older People's Services have seen a marked reduction in the number of carer's assessment being accepted.

Older People

- As of 31/3/2022 66.4% of service users in Integrated Community Teams had received an annual care review. This is a deterioration in the figure of 87% from 31/3/2021. This is due to impact of COVID absence, general absence and vacancies in teams. There has also been an increase in new referrals following a decline in 2020/21.
- Reduction in Direct Payments during the reporting period.

Adult Learning Disability

- Carried forward risk - Resettlement of patients from Muckamore Abbey to bespoke placements in the community.
- The programme has encountered new challenges in the provision of day care and day opportunities. (Data 1.6)

Hospital Social Work

- Unscheduled Care has experienced unprecedented demand across both Antrim and Causeway Hospitals with significant number of attendances at ED and increased admission rates. As a result, Hospital Social Work Teams have experienced a significant increase in referrals. We have experienced episodes of extreme pressures with up to 99 Complex Patients (Antrim Area Hospital) being declared medically fit and requiring Social Work input for discharge in a single day. Whilst an episode of increased pressure historically has been felt during winter months, this is in contrast to this year, with no easement being felt.

1.5 Comment on the Trust's current workforce arrangement for both the professional leadership of delegated directed statutory functions and the operational delivery of service

The Trust maintains a requirement for an unbroken line of professional oversight between the Executive Director of Social Work and frontline Social Work Practitioners. Professional workforce arrangements are an integral part of the overall system of checks and balances that holds the Trust to account for the performance and governance arrangements within professional social work practice.

*The Trusts Social Work Supervision Policy, Standards and Criteria (Children's Services) Health & Social Care Trusts (Adopted Regional Policy) and Professional Supervision Policy for Social Work Staff Employed in Adult Services outlines the frequency, agreed framework and minimum standards for professional social work supervision.

The professional oversight arrangements ensure the Executive Director of Social Work and the Trust board of directors that there is appropriate professional advice and analysis regarding the Trust's discharge of DSF.

The professional oversight arrangements provide collective accountability for:

- Providing professional leadership on all social work and social care matters
- Ensuring appropriate internal organisational, managerial and professional arrangements are in place for the professional oversight of Social Work practice
- Maintaining open and constructive working relationships and sharing information with each other as appropriate
- Adopting a collaborative and supportive approach to clarifying and resolving issues as they arise thereby minimizing the need for escalation and/or formal intervention.

The Trust has initiated a number of proactive, collaborative approaches to recruitment difficulties, which are already underway and need to be developed further, to ensure an adequate supply of social workers and improve and strengthen the workplace supports and practice for every social worker.

The Trust is currently focusing on 4 key areas that are connected to the OSS DoH SW

Workforce Review.**1. Safe staffing levels**

The Trust is taking part in a number of working groups to develop regional consistency, (*using agreed workforce data*) in the numbers, deployment and use of social work practitioners (*including use of title*), based on the development of a model to identify normative staffing/safe practice levels for social work services.

2. Manageable / normative caseloads

We know workload is highly correlated with caseload size, severity and complexity of cases. High / complex caseloads has an ongoing negative workforce impact which results in depleted attrition, and results in certain service areas getting a poor reputation leading to an inability to recruit and increased service pressure. The Trust has established work to pilot an evidenced based model to measure a balanced workload for social work staff, it is anticipated that a pilot will allow social work teams to track their resource needs showing not just temporary needs but longer term caseload trends.

3. Career progression (enhanced skill mix, salary/T&C for Social Work with families and children)

The Trust is considering mechanisms to implement a career-planning framework setting out pathways for career progression supported by relevant development and CPD opportunities. Consideration is being given to a pilot with the Family Intervention Service to review the career progressions pathway and develop an enhanced route to a specialist Child Protection Practitioner (B7) role within the Family Support and Intervention Service. Work has been undertaken to review skill mix and ensure teams under significant pressure are enhanced with additional B4/B5 support roles. The NHSCT has introduced a transfer policy to enable movement and redeployment of staff within the Trust.

Frontline childcare teams remain significantly impacted by the ongoing workforce challenges, as noted above this has resulted in some emerging pressures and risks associated with the delivery of statutory functions, further work outlined in section 2.5 of the family and childcare programme report illustrates steps currently being taken to address the impact of workforce challenges on our statutory functions.

4. Widening access to options for Employment Based pathways in Family and Childcare to improve supply

In order to increase supply the Trust will engage in appropriate measures to promote social work as a career choice and review the routes into the profession and develop options for leavers to return. The Trust is especially focused on reviewing pathways into social work, including, a career progression pathway for social care workers that includes access to a social work qualification and the development of a Trust wide social work bank.