

1. Purpose of report.

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview and summary of progress and developments to the Schools Forum since the last report produced in September 2016.

2. Development of service –staffing.

Recruitment has proved a challenge since a position became vacant in July 2016. Despite repeated recruitment campaigns, we did not manage to find a replacement social worker until recently still leaving a vacant post. Due to the difficulties in recruiting a social worker, we decided to acknowledge the level of safeguarding expertise held by other professionals, and widened the scope of the advert in January 2017. Ironically several social workers applied; however, we were impressed overall by the knowledge and skills of two experienced workers who have accepted the offer of Community Care Worker posts. One is an experienced Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and another has significant safeguarding experience working for the local authority. These individuals will add depth and strength to the team. Both will be in post by the summer term.

3. Children's Services – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

TESS remains a significant part of the MASH. Although the plan to subject all referrals to a "virtual MASH meeting" did not happen in September, this has been approved within the last week. In theory this should not duplicate requests for information from schools, as the social workers in the assessment teams will not need to send pro formae, having been provided with the MASH information. Schools have been outstanding in turning around short notice requests for information, some providing wishes and feelings from the child using the "Three Houses Model" and this has been invaluable in ensuring that the voice of the child is heard, particularly if there is no social care history for the family. It is appreciated that this proves a significant challenge for schools, but it cannot be overstated that this information can make all the difference to a child's life.

4. Referrals and conversion rates.

Schools are the highest referrer to the MASH. This is to be expected given that children and young people spend a significant part of their life at school. Referrals from schools which are deemed to meet threshold is 40%, this compares to 20% from other agencies. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of TESS on referral processes, due to the fact that only by going through the referral stage does information become available which might significantly affect the outcome of the referral. Previous analysis showed that the majority of referrals from schools met threshold for MASH or Early Help. Further analysis will hopefully become possible as capacity increases within TESS. MASH now notifies TESS of any referrals where consent has not been sought from families where there is no evidence of significant harm, or where the referral is deemed inappropriate for other reasons and these are followed up with individual schools.

5. Contacts with schools.

It was a worry that with only one social worker it would prove impossible to sustain the level of service to schools. This worry was not borne out as can be seen by the table below. (¹ 5 days annual leave ² 2 weeks school holiday) This figure is actually underreported as Natalie

(TESS administrator) also collects information for MARAC, strategy meetings and the Early Help panel which is not included here.

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Totals
2016/7	264	266	243 ¹	215 ²	326	1314
2015/6	193	182	120	128	152	775

6. Meetings at schools

In addition to contacts with schools, 78 meetings have taken place on school sites in the period Sep-Jan. These have been either Team around the Family meetings or meetings with parents when school have asked for support. Taken together with the contacts with schools, TESS has had direct contact with every school in the Bay during this period to offer advice or support or to provide information to Children's Services.

7. Future steps

Having now almost doubled our capacity and having maintained the advice and support role by withdrawing from forums where the benefits for schools were not really clear, there is an opportunity to return to the review of TESS and consider what schools would like from the service. For some schools, a regular presence was requested, for others supervision was asked for. Training has been requested on occasion. TESS still has a significant role in the Early Help process, supporting schools with their lead professional role, this despite the fact schools are now being invited to attend Early Help Panel and there is a Team around the Family Advisor (TAFA) in post to assist with complex TAF's. It would now be helpful for schools to reflect and guide the service in the direction where it can be most useful.

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