

2018/19 Performance
Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
07th March 2019

Purpose of the report

This summary report highlights performance issues and progress arising in 2018/19 for Children's Services.

It draws on the performance, benchmarking and risk information presented quarterly to the Committee through the performance scorecard. The Quarter 3 2018/19 performance scorecard is attached to this report as supporting information for the Committee's consideration.

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Report Sponsor: Chris Spencer, Director of Children's Services

KEY:

▲	Performance is below target/requires attention (Red/Amber/Yellow used to denote extent of concern)
●	Performance is acceptable/within tolerance
★	Performance is good/exceeds target
→↓↑	Direction of travel (Red/Amber/Green used to denote performance level)

Note: All changes in performance levels are shown as a percentage increase/decrease in order to apply a consistent unit of measure across the report as well as to show the significance of the change.

Summary of key performance

The number of children open to Social Care overall has remained relatively steady during 2018 with a small increase of 2.5% (around 100 children).

Timeliness of decision making at the Front Door reduced marginally over Q3 (67% in December) but remains improved on the position at the start of the year (April 55%)

Timeliness of Single Assessments is good with the majority of assessments completed within timescale (80%). However performance has marginally dropped below tolerance of target for the first time this year.

A high proportion of Children in Need had been seen within timescales at the end of Quarter 3 (84%). The majority of Children in Need have a plan that has been put in place in a timely way (95%).

The majority of children subject to Protection Plans had been seen within timescales at the end of Quarter 3. Initial and Review Conferences are being held in a timely manner (86% and 98% respectively at the end of December).

31% of children made subject to a protection plan in the last year having been subject to one or more previous plans.

With an increasing number of Children in Care there is a corresponding strain on the number and suitability of available placements. In the January Cabinet, the Sufficiency Strategy was approved and improvements are expected as the Strategy is implemented.

Initial and review health assessments for Children in Care remain an area of focus in addressing overdue health assessments (22%) and improving initial health assessment timeliness (32%).

The number of Social Workers holding higher caseloads has remained relatively static since last quarter.

There are three areas that continue to represent the highest risk:

- The timeliness of visits to children open to social care and following contact have improved although both require a continued focus. A high proportion of children continue to still experience delays in being seen following contact affecting our ability to assure that they are safe and their needs are being met.
- Workforce churn continues to impact stability of Social Worker for children, reducing opportunities to build trusting relationships, identify and follow up on risk of harm and progress plans.
- Delays in case recording are evident following child protection visits and admissions to care impacting sight of up-to-date information for children, risk levels and the legal status of children.

Contact Activity

★ 77.2% of decisions were made within 24 hours of contact in Quarter 3 overall. This has improved since 73.5% in Quarter 2 and is a significant increase compared with 49.4% in Quarter 1. 94% of decisions were made within 48 hours in Quarter 3. However, timeliness followed a declining trend month on month throughout the quarter with 67% of decisions made within 24 hours at the end of December.

↑ Following a reduction in the number of the contacts requiring a Social Care response in the previous two quarters, the number of contacts has increased in Quarter 3. The number and percentage of the contacts leading to referral and then onto assessment has also increased: 75% and 77% respectively. This is an increase from Quarter 2 where 71% and 75% respectively (See Fig 1).

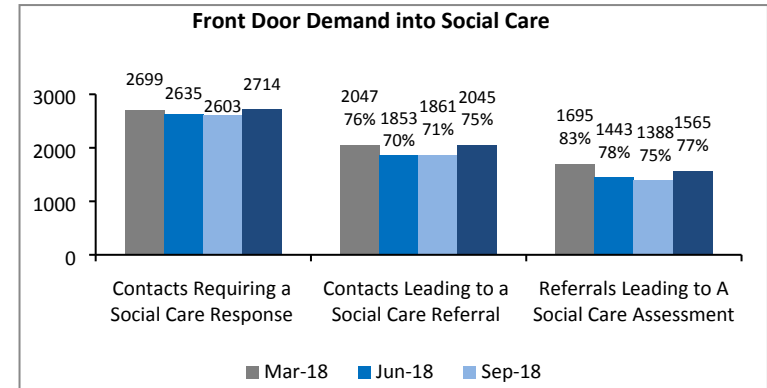


Fig 1

Referrals and Re-referrals

↑ The overall timeliness of seeing children following referral continues to improve (See Fig 2). However just under half of children (45%) referred are still not being seen in a timely way.

▲ For a small number of children, an initial visit has not taken place and is significantly delayed. The Director of Safeguarding is investigating these referrals.

→ 29.2% of referrals were re-referrals within the last 12 months at the end of December 2018. The proportion of re-referrals has decreased slightly since last quarter but continues to fluctuate. Good/Outstanding Local Authorities have an average re-referral rate of 24.3%.

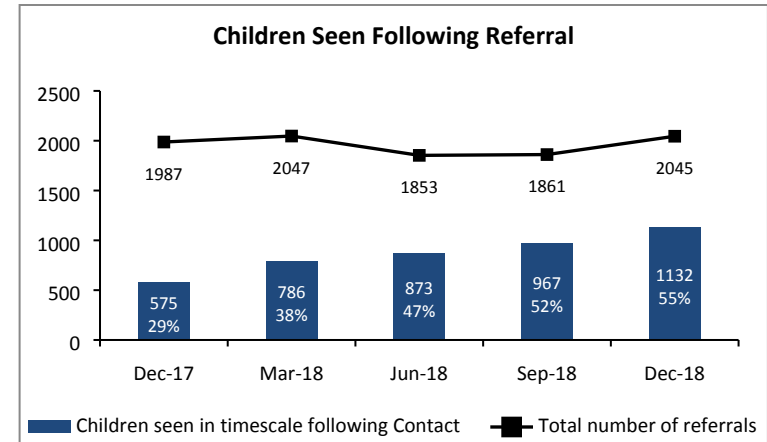


Fig. 2

Single Assessments

- ▼ 80% (1679) of all assessments completed in Quarter 3 were within 45 working days. Although the number of assessments completed within quarter 3 are higher than the previous quarters in the year this is the first quarter where performance has fallen marginally below target and is below performance of Good and Outstanding Local Authorities (84.8%). **(See Fig. 3)**
- ➔ The majority of open assessments remained within timescale at the end of December 2018 (88%). This is a marginal improvement in performance compared with the previous quarter. This provides an opportunity to focus on addressing overdue assessments and assessments resulting in no further action, despite taking 45 days to come to that view. **(See Fig. 4).**

Children in Need

- ▲ There were 2160 Children in Need at the end of December 2018. The number of Children in Need has been relatively static over 12 months 2137 to 2160.
- ★ 84% (1806) of Children in Need had been seen within timescale at the end of December. This is above target (80%) and a continued improvement on Quarters 1 and 2 **(See Fig. 5)**.
- ▼ 14% of children (354) had not been visited in timescales at the end of December 2018 **(See Fig 5)**.
- 94% of children (2032) have been on a plan for 1 year or less; this is within tolerance of the 97% target.
- ★ 94.7% of Children in Need have had a plan put in place in a timely way or remain within the assessment period.

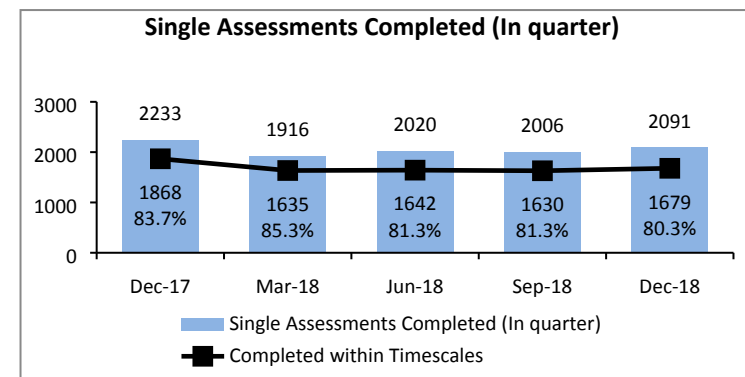


Fig 3

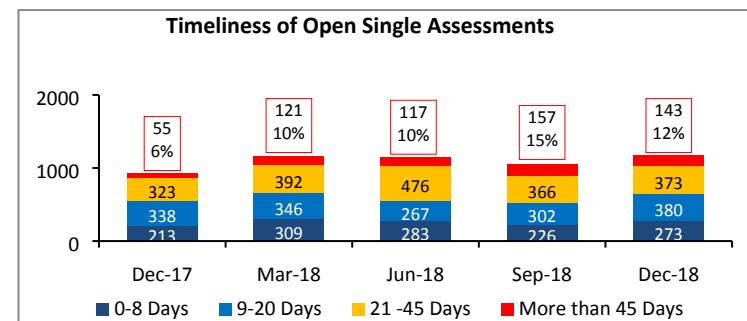


Fig 4

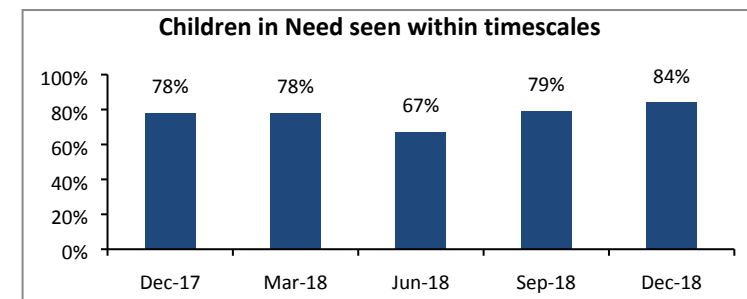


Fig 5

Children in Need of Help and Protection

- ▼ There has been a small decrease in the number of children subject to protection plans for the first quarter this year; down 2.7% from 885 to 861 (**See Fig. 6**).
- ★ 86.4% of children on child protection plans (743 children) had been seen within 10 working days at the end of December 2018. This is above target of 85% (**See Fig.7**). The improvement in reported performance has resulted from a change to the reporting cycle which now captures visits that had taken place where there was a lag in case recording.
- ➔ 97.8% of children have been subject to a protection plan for less than 2 years. Performance remains better than Good and Outstanding authorities (97.4%).
- ➔ The percentage of children subject to a second or subsequent plan has increased, 228 children (26.5%) were experiencing further intervention and re-work at the end of December (**See Fig.8**). The rate of reregistration on to a CP plan and length of time on plan are potentially related and a line of further enquiry.
- ★ 44.6% (Rolling year) of Initial Child Protection conferences were held within 15 working days. However, throughout the quarter the proportion of Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 working days has continued to improve from 62% at the end of Quarter 2 to 86% at the end of Quarter 3; performance is now above target (80%).
- ★ 97.7% of Review Conferences completed were in timescale during Quarter 3. Performance is above target (90%) and above Good and Outstanding authorities (92.4%).

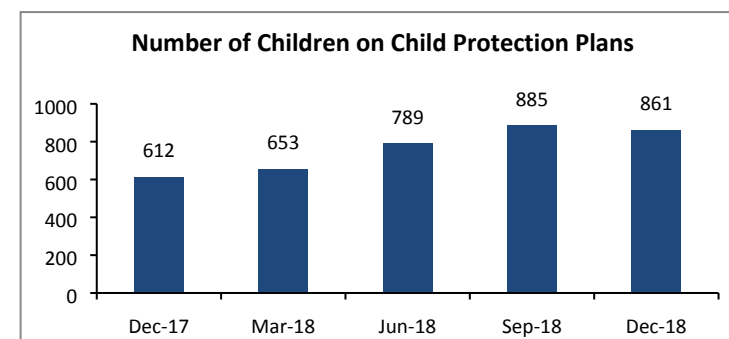


Fig 6

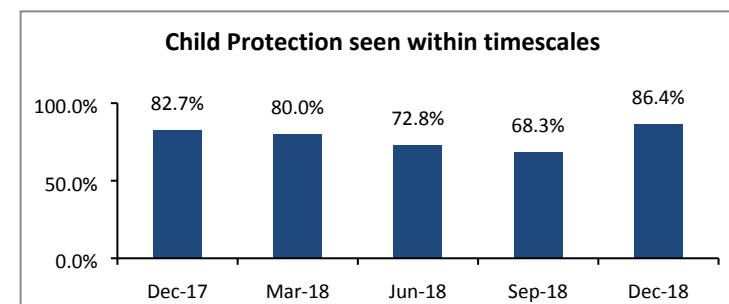


Fig 7

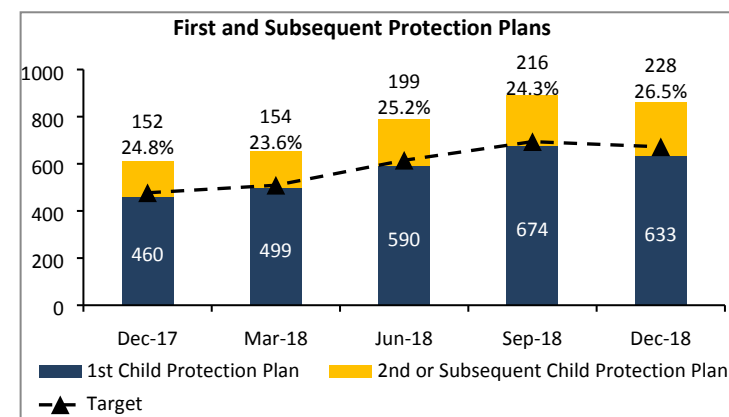


Fig 8

Children in Care

↑ The number of children in care has steadily increased since December 2017, up 9.9% from 636 children to 699 at the end of December 2018. (See Fig 9). 84 Children have been admitted to care and 56 children left care in quarter 3.

→ One-fifth of admissions continue to be for children returning to care following a previous care episode.

▲ There continue to be delays in recording when a child has come into care. The Senior Leadership team are investigating improvements.

There are 219 (31.3%) children accommodated under Section 20 this is above the 2017/18 national average of 19%. The number of children accommodated under Section 20 has increased in from 207 children in Quarter 2 to 219 children in Quarter 3 (See Fig 10).

Statutory Visits

At the end of Quarter 3, 96% of children in Care had an up to date Statutory Visit. This represents a marginal decline over the last two quarters (See Fig 11).

Assessments and Pathway Plans

↑ The percentage of children who have an up-to-date assessment has improved throughout 2018/19 from 79% in April to 91% at the end of December.

↑ 79% of children in care who should have a Pathway Plan have a plan in place, this is an improvement compared to Quarter 2 where (71%); continued improvement is required. Of those children in care who have a pathway plan, the overwhelming majority of plans are up-to-date (97%).

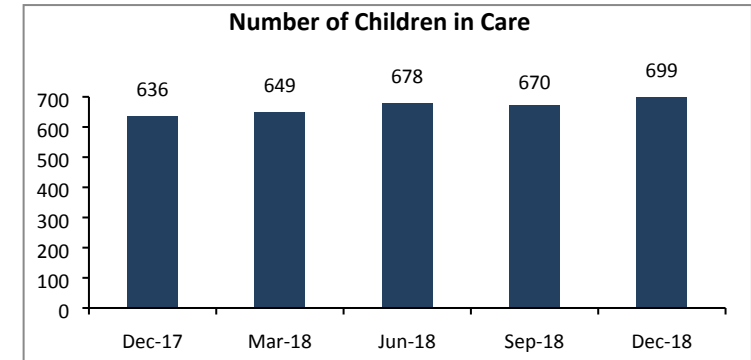


Fig 9

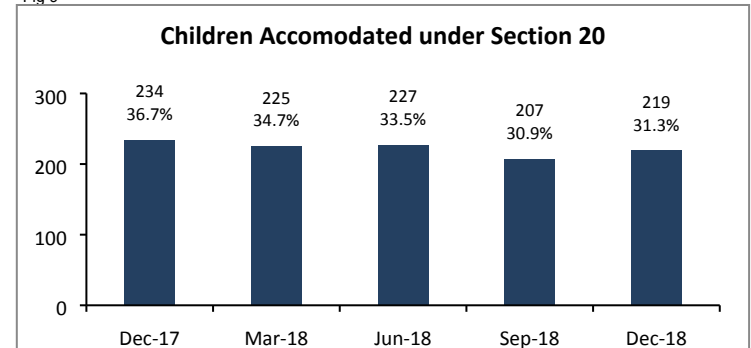


Fig10

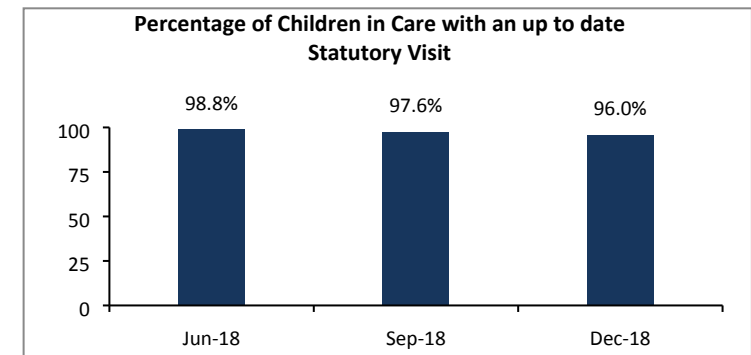


Fig 11

Placement Stability

- ➔ At the end of Quarter 3, 54 children (7.7%) had 3 or more placements in the last 12 months during their current period of care this remains relatively static month on month.
- ⬆️ With a high and increasing number of Children in Care there is a strain on the number and suitability of available placements. Nearly a quarter of children in care are now placed out of County following a steady increase throughout 2018 (See Fig. 12).

The sufficiency strategy which outlines how the county council will support children in care and leaving care to secure a stable family environment and, where possible, reunite more children with their own families has been approved by Cabinet in January 2019.

Health and Well Being

- ▲ Following admission to care, 32% of initial health assessments were carried out within timescale in December. This is an increase on the previous quarter but requires further significant improvement and is being addressed through the entry to care work now underway.
- ⬆️ At the end of Quarter 3, 78% of children in care (548) had an up to date health assessment. This is an improvement compared with Quarter 2. However, the availability of review health check appointments is presenting difficulties in addressing overdue health checks as there are currently expected wait times of several months.
- ⬆️ 79%, of children in care aged 2 or over (486) had a dental check that was up to date at the end of Quarter 3, this is a small improvement on Quarter 2: 76%.

Empowerment and Feedback

- ⬆️ During Quarter 3, 109 MOMO statements have been sent by 58 children using their personal accounts (1.4% of children open to Social Care). This is an increase on both Quarters 1 and 2 74 and 66 MOMO statements respectively had been sent by children. Themes were as follows: sort out a problem (35), worker visit (22), preparation for a meeting/conference (17), sharing good news (16).
- ➔ A similar number of complaints were received this quarter to last quarter (54 and 50 respectively). This equates to 1.3% of the children open to Social Care). The number of complaints has been steadily increasing over the year up 23% from the end of March 2018. The majority of complaints related to quality of service: errors or omissions in assessments, letters, minutes or statements.

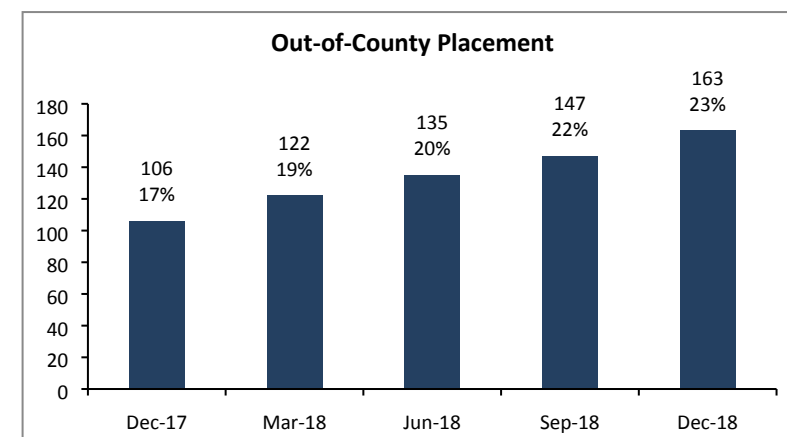


Fig 12

↓ The proportion of complaints that were upheld or partially upheld decreased in Quarter 3 down to 17 (equating to 32% of the complaints received in the quarter).

Caseload Levels

At the end of December, 4090 children were open to Social Care (See Fig. 13). The number of children open to Social Care has remained relatively steady throughout 2018 with a small increase of 2.5% (around 100 children).

↑ The number of case holding workers has gradually increased and is currently 284, compared with 225 in December 2017.

↓ The number of Social Workers holding higher caseloads remained the same as Quarter 2, with 50 Social Workers responsible for more than 20 children each (See Fig.14). However there has been an increase in those Social Workers responsible for more than 25 children (13 up from 6).

Unallocated Cases

→ The overwhelming majority of children (99.1%) have an allocated case worker at the end of Quarter 3. There are more children who have experienced a delay in being allocated a worker than in Quarter 2. (See Fig. 14). Overall, the percentage of children allocated a Social Worker has remained strong throughout 2018; ranging between 98.5%-99.3%. Given the level of workforce churn, this is positive in terms of risk management.

Workforce Stability

→ At the end of December, 89.9% of children have had fewer than 3 changes of Social Worker in the last 6 months. This is a static position as workforce churn continues and a high number of children continue to have frequent changes of Social Worker.

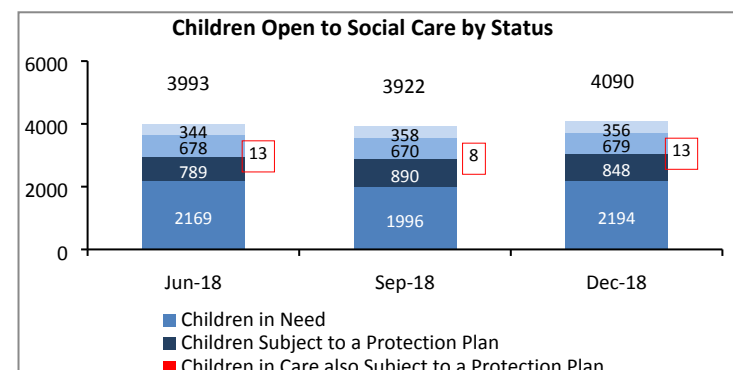


Fig 13

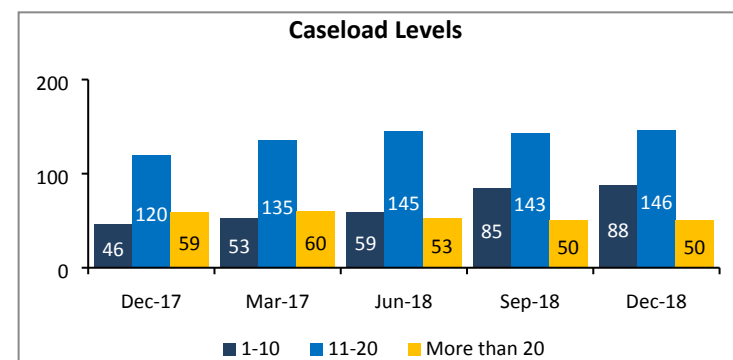
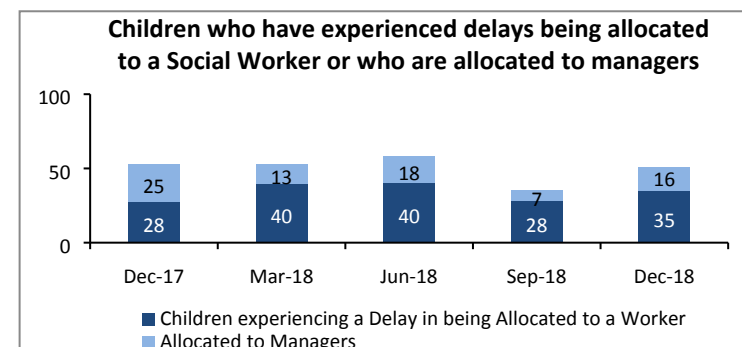


Fig 14



Risk

- ➔ Strategic risk relating to Ineffective social care practice, management oversight and review processes resulting in drift and delay for children and young people in situations of harm is set at Moderate 12 (See Fig 13). A comprehensive Improvement Plan has been developed, with input from Improvement Partner (Essex County Council), with progress subject to oversight by the Children's Improvement Board. The Ofsted Improvement Plan is in place and areas of key focus are an integrated MASH to ensure a consistent, timely and effective response to contacts, a comprehensive programme of professional and management development for the social care workforce, a robust Quality Assurance framework to enable management and senior leaders to understand the effectiveness of practice in improving outcomes for children and young people, the implementation of practice standards covering all aspects of social care activity and a robust multi-agency focus on complex safeguarding issues including criminal/sexual exploitation, radicalisation and missing episodes.
- ➔ Strategic risk relating to Insufficient workforce capacity and/or instability adversely impacting on pace and sustainability of improvement and contributing to discontinuity in social engagement with children and families is set at Moderate 12 (See Fig 13). Additional funding that has been provided to Children's Services to increase capacity and ensure caseloads are manageable. The Recruitment and Relocation Strategy is in place including enhanced package for 'hard to recruit' posts, 'Grow our own' approach to workforce development including ASYE, Frontline and Step Up to Social Worker and overseas social work recruitment.
- ➔ Strategic risk relating to failure to develop sufficient placement capacity to meet the needs of children looked after is set at High 16 (See Fig 13). A revised Sufficiency Strategy has been completed and a refreshed Recruitment strategy is in place for foster carers with the aim of increasing the numbers and proportion of children cared for by 'in house' foster care provision. Further work is to take place with health partners to develop specialist residential provision as part of the IRIS Project.
- ➔ Strategic risk relating to failure to close the gaps in educational outcomes for vulnerable learners and their peers resulting in adverse impacts for children and families, increased cost/pressures on specialist provision and damage to reputation remained at Moderate, 12. (See Fig 15). Reshaping Education phase 1 is complete and phase 2 is underway.

Fig 14

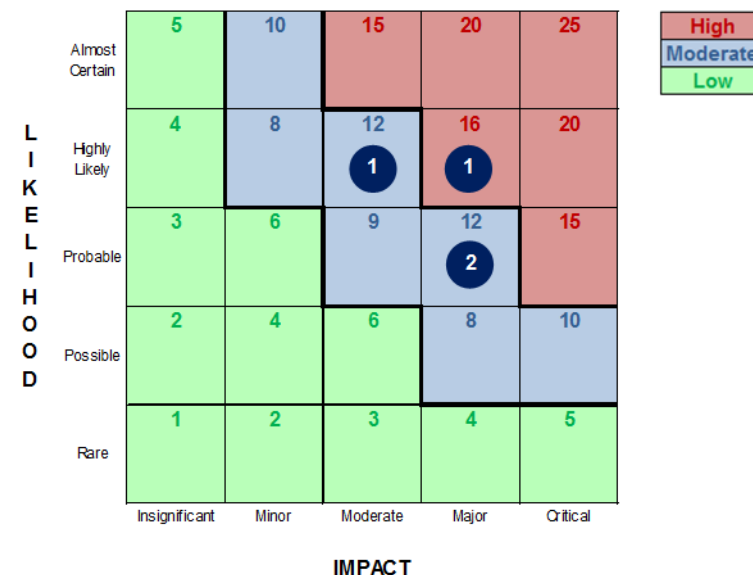


Fig 15

