



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Provider Assurance Report

Midlands Service Area

Name of Service Area:	Midlands
OSV No:	4422 & 4423
Name of provider:	Tusla
Chief Operations Officer:	Mr. Jim Gibson
Date of Request:	6 December 2019
Date to be returned	30 January 2020

Assurance is required in the following area:

1. Unallocated Cases

Please outline how the unallocated cases project has impacted on the waiting list in the Midlands.

As part of the national unallocated cases project, the area was allocated an additional 3 social care posts. In addition to this, the area manager provides regular updates to the service director relating to the work taking place to reduce unallocated cases. This is through regular 1:1 meetings and monthly reports when returning the MTP data.

As indicated in the Quarter 3 2019, Performance and Activity Report, the Midlands continues to have the highest referral rate based on percentage of population. The national average rate equates to 13 referrals per 1000 population under 18yrs. The Midlands rate of referral was almost double at 22 per 1000. The Quarter 3 data references the Midlands as having the second highest referral, receiving 1,755 referrals during this specific timeframe. Despite this, 99% of referrals received a preliminary enquiry. 55% of PE's were completed within 5 days which is significantly higher than the national average of 27%.

As is evidenced by the figures in the section below regarding cases awaiting allocation, the area has evidenced a clear reduction in cases waiting within the Duty /Intake service. Cases waiting in Jan 2019 were 329, reduced to 174 in December '19. High rated cases waiting also evidence a significant reduction, reducing from 84 in January to 20 in December.

The re-structuring of the Duty / Intake service into dedicated IR and IA teams was a major contributing factor. As was the introduction of the 5th Duty T.Leader, a role which has a specific focus on cases awaiting allocation.

While Children in Care awaiting allocation were evidencing a downward trend up to August, SW staffing vacancies arising had an impact during the third quarter of the year. The re-allocation of resources within the area facilitated the allocation of an additional T.Leader to the service. This post has a specific focus on cases awaiting allocation and has enhanced the governance of cases awaiting allocation.

Please clearly provide the following data/information:

The number of unallocated cases in the Midlands in the Child Protection and Welfare Service by priority level:

DUTY / INTAKE SERVICE:

Despite staffing vacancies and on-going high referral rates the Duty service has significantly reduced the number of cases waiting from 329 in January to 172 end of December (Decrease of 157). High cases waiting reduced from 84 in January to 18 end of December (Decrease of 66).

- January- 329 – 84H; 196M; 49L - Referrals 622
- February - 245 – 59H;152M;34L – Referrals 511
- March- 266 – 37H;183M; 46L – Referrals 591
- April- 275 – 61H; 175M; 39L – Referrals 531
- May – 230 – 26H; 171M; 33L – Referrals 592
- June – 231 – 36H; 151M; 44L – Referrals 484
- July - 216 – 15H; 163M; 38L. – Referrals – 505
- August – 156 - 14H; 89M; 53L. – Referrals – 440
- Sept – 205 – 24H; 125M; 56 L- 60 of these referrals active on duty. Referrals - 468
- October – 205 – 30H; 109M; 66 L- 64 of these referrals active on duty. Referrals - 556
- November – 165 – 38H; 105M; 22L – 21 of these referrals active on Duty. Referrals – 523
- December – 172 – 18H, 146M, 8L – 19 of these referrals were active on duty and 153 remaining unallocated. Referrals – 378
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All cases waiting are subject to monthly review by Team Leaders with the oversight of the Principal Social Worker and more frequent if additional information is received.

CPW SERVICE:

For the majority of 2019 the CPW Service had no cases awaiting allocation. Unfortunately, due to staffing vacancies arising late in the year, the service had a small number of cases waiting in November and December. Restricted caseloads for less experienced staff also has an impact on case allocation.

- Jan – 23 – 12 M; 11 L
- Feb – Oct – 0
- Nov – 7 all M rated
- Dec – 8 – 4 M; 4 L

All cases waiting are kept under monthly review by Team Leader with the oversight of the PSW.

Performance data including the governance of cases waiting is a standard item for discussion during supervision between Team Leaders and Principal Social Worker and Principal Social Worker and Area Manager. The matter is also a standard item for performance meetings between Area Manager and Service Director. The service director also reports directly to the COO relating to unallocated cases.

The number of unallocated children in care as of the 31/12/2019:

- January = 59
- February = 73
- March = 78
- April = 70
- May = 51
- June = 53
- July = 37
- August = 47
- September = 53
- October = 50
- November = 45
- December = 50

As of Dec 30th, there were 50 CIC awaiting allocation. This is specific to staffing vacancies and the need for less experienced staff to have restricted caseloads. All children awaiting allocation are subject to 3 monthly safe-guarding visits by a designated qualified Social Care professional with oversight of Team Leader and Principal Social Worker.

The means by which the COO is assured of the reduction in unallocated cases in the Midlands:

The regional service director reports directly to the COO with regard to unallocated cases. At national meetings, performance data is discussed, analysed and reported on.

The COO also maintains a tracker relating to the national unallocated cases project and met with all service directors and area managers in Q3 2019 to discuss this and ensure all areas were made aware of expectations relating to the project.

MTP data from midlands which is submitted nationally provides assurances that the number of unallocated cases in Midlands have reduced.

Whether this project will be extended into 2020:

The national unallocated project will not be extended into 2020 in its current format. That said, the focus on unallocated cases will continue but the governance for this will be through existing structures from area manager to service director and COO.

It is important to note, that nationally work has also taken place with regard to service performance. The CEO has introduced for example a performance conference approach whereby all areas/regions and national services within Tusla will be required to report at regular performance conference meetings on key performance metrics, which will include unallocated cases. The focus of these conferences will be on whether data is accurate; what is plan in place to address any performance risks/issues and also to ensure a systemic approach with regard to performance, including support from other directorates within agency including finance, HR, quality assurance and policy.

If so, the projected outcomes, including timelines of the project:

The target in the 2020 Tusla business plan is to reduce unallocated cases (including referrals relating to retrospective abuse) by 20%.

Assurance is required in the following area:

2. Recruitment/Resources

Please outline how the Midlands Service Area benefited from recruitment initiatives and the pilot of the workforce development plan.

The Area was allocated 3 additional Social Care Leader positions, which are active in recruitment. One of the posts has been accepted and a start date has been agreed. The

three additional posts have been allocated to the Duty / Intake team to assist with front door screening and assessment of child welfare concerns.

As part of the national unallocated project, the national workforce planner manager is also liaising with each area within the project relating to unfilled vacancies to identify and progress initiatives that may assist in filling these posts. This work commenced initially with areas within the national project that had the highest number of vacancies i.e Dublin North, Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipp and it has now progressed to work with the Midlands. This work includes identifying current vacant posts within Intake and CPW pillars. It will include the running of bespoke campaigns are required.

In addition to the above, in Quarter 4 2019, an initiative was launched by the CEO to convert agency staff in Tusla over to temporary and permanent contracts. The purpose of this is to ensure most effective and efficient use of resources (as it eliminates the agency fee) and also to provide more stability within areas to support service planning and delivery. In DML, 94 staff have accepted to convert from agency to temporary/permanent contracts. In Midlands, the figure is 21.

An Agency Usage review has resulted in agency conversions – a process to directly employ Agency Staff in the area. This has resulted in 21 agency staff accepting direct contracts of employment with Tusla in this area with the many assigned to posts within front line services. This exercise will add stability to the workforce and fill vacancies by direct employment.

A process to hire Pre-Registered Graduates pending their CORU Registration is currently being explored with an objective to engage graduates at the earliest date possible. Midlands Area will benefit from this process which is expected to be approved and implemented in Q2 2020.

A Comprehensive Review of Retention issues at the front door is currently work in progress to address staff retention challenges through investigating the current retention challenges at the front door in the 5 selected areas and preparing a retention proposal for action.

The scope of the review is to provide:

- Comprehensive analysis of retention initiatives and issues at front door in 5 areas
- Draft a Retention proposal to agree next steps/action plan

A Retention workgroup was established with representation from each area. Meetings discussed and documented retention related issues in all areas.

A staff survey was conducted the analysis of responses is currently work in progress. The final report is due to be complete by end Q1 2020. Midlands Service Area benefited from direct analysis of their retention issues which will result in a relevant action plan.

Midlands Service Area have access to recruitment panels formed from the ongoing rolling campaign for PQSW and from the Graduate Campaign in 2019. The Bespoke Campaign approach was not required by the Midlands Service Area at this point in time as vacancies identified are in recruitment process.

HR/Tusla Recruit will continue to work closely with the area to prioritise vacant posts and can provide Bespoke Campaign should the need arise. Graduate Campaign 2020 will replenish existing PQSW panel.

In addition to this, a bursary scheme is in place with Maynooth National University of Ireland, whereby students will be awarded sponsorships to come to work for Tusla on graduating and to take up positions with high unallocated cases/ high staff vacancies. The interviews for this scheme happened in January 2020.

A new initiative is also in place to ensure that students doing placements in Tusla view Tusla as an employer of choice on graduation. This includes ensuring that students are provided immediately on commencing their practice placement the required ICT equipment (laptop and mobile phone). In the Midlands, there are currently 9 students on practice placements. It is our experience that this is very often one of the most effective ways of recruiting new staff to an area.

The regional service director has also engaged directly with both Maynooth university (as it sits within the areas/locations where posts are hard to fill within region) and also with Tallaght (Technological University Dublin) with regard to both social care and social work graduates. It is hoped that by further developing these strategic alliances, that students will be encouraged to see child protection and welfare work as an attractive career option.

Please clearly provide the following data/information:

The outcome of the comprehensive review of resources at the 'front door'

A Comprehensive Review of Vacancies was undertaken at the 'front door'.

The scope of the review was:

- Comprehensive review of vacancies at the front door: produce a comprehensive picture, area by area, on vacancies, actions taken to date and problems experienced in filling these vacancies;
- Provision of step by step process for vacancy management for Area Teams (from vacancy identification, vacancy approval, through to appointment);
- Respond to specific recruitment risks escalated to Core Team and work with Service Directors to resolve specific recruitment issues, including bespoke campaigns;
- Commission the PMO to complete a lean management review of processes to fill existing vacancies from the moment staff hands in notice in existing post to post being filled.

Outcome:

A Comprehensive Review Report is in draft and is expected to be completed in full during Feb 2020. This report provides a baseline of resources at the front door and within the wider area. The actions taken date and the issues in filling vacancies has been documented and recommendations will be made to address issues noted. The review will result in an action plan for the area to address issues identified in filling vacant posts.

A step by step vacancy management process is available to the area to ensure correct processes are applied in filling vacancies.

The midlands did not require an individual Bespoke Campaign for the area as posts are being processed by Tusla Recruit with panels in places. There is a provision of an ongoing focus to continue to fill vacancies in the area in the area and work is ongoing to improve processes.

A Lean Management exercise has commenced this is expected to be completed in Q1 2020. This exercise will review of processes to fill existing vacancies from the moment staff hands in notice in existing post to post being filled. The objective is to provide an

evidence driven understanding of the processes of filling of a position and to determine an optimal process for filling a vacancy in the future.

An action plan for 2020 will emerge from the final Review Report and some short, medium and long term actions set to assist area to try and fill vacancies as they arise

The number of approved WTE posts in the Child Protection and Welfare Service

See template attached

The number of new posts approved since September 2019 (if applicable)

See template attached

The number of approved WTE posts in the foster care service

See template attached

The number of posts filled in the foster care service since September 2019

See template attached

The number of filled posts in the Child protection and Welfare Service since September 2019

See template attached

A breakdown of vacancies per function (Child Protection and Welfare Service and Foster Care Service)as of 31/12/2019

See template attached

Specific initiatives employed to ensure effective use of resources

As outlined above, a initiative was launched in Quarter 4 2019 relating to converting agency staff in Tusla over to temporary/permanent contracts. This initiative was to ensure greater use of resources (as agency costs a fee to Tusla) and also to ensure more stability and security is brought to Tusla services. In DML, 94 staff have accepted to convert over to contracts with Tusla. In the Midlands, there are **insert figure.....**

In the Midlands, further organisational changes were made to the structure of Duty / Intake into dedicated Intake records (screening) and initial assessment teams. This has proven to be an effective use of resources as it has streamlined the assessment process at the front door.

Despite the consistent high referral rate, over 2019 the service has evidenced a significant reduction in cases awaiting allocation, specifically High rated cases. Any H rated cases waiting are kept under active review by the additional Social Work Team Leader and are further reviewed during supervision between Social Work Team Leader and Principal SW.

As an interim measure, pending filling of Social Work positions with Social Work graduates, the area has filled some Social Work vacancies with Social Care Leader staff. This has assisted in the completion of Welfare assessments at front door and the governance of Children in Care awaiting allocation.

Using existing resources, the area allocated an additional Team Leader to Duty / Intake with a specific focus on cases awaiting allocation, specifically High rated cases.

In Children in care the area converted a vacant Social Work, Snr Practitioner post into an additional Team leader post with a specific focus on Children in Care awaiting allocation. This enhanced the governance of cases waiting.

The area places a strong emphasis on facilitating SW Student placements, as it is conscious that graduates very often look to an area where they completed a placement when they have completed their studies and are seeking employment. Currently, the area has 9 SW on placements students. A retention initiative is in place to ensure that all students on placement are provided immediately with ICT equipment (laptop and mobile phone) to encourage students to see Tusla the employer of choice when they graduate.

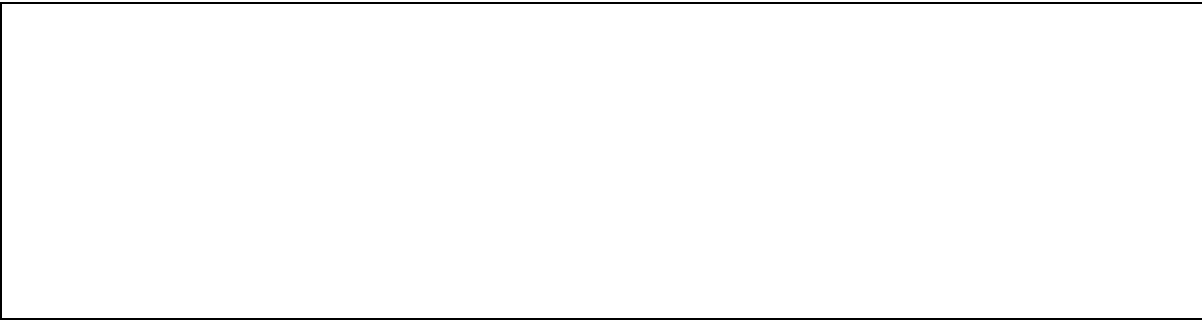
Under the Unallocated Case Project, the area obtained an additional 3 Social Care Leader posts to assist with the screening and assessment of welfare concerns at the front door. The area intentionally sought SCL positions to further add to the skill mix within the Duty / Intake team but also being conscious that in light of the shortage nationally of Social Work graduates it was likely that there would be a long waiting time to fill SW vacancies whereas SCL graduates were more readily available.

Assurance is required in the following area:

3. PPFS and pathways to community based early intervention

Please outline how children and families in the Midlands benefited from the review and strengthening of PPFS and pathways to community based early intervention.

- (1) In 2019 PPFS, the two CFSN / Meitheal Co-Ordinator positions within the area, moved into the TUSLA area management structure, which enhanced the governance of the service (these posts were previously provided by grant funded agencies). . A review of trained Meitheal staff across our funded and community services is currently under way. Each service working with children and families received a visit from Tusla coordinators in 2019. The purpose of this visit was to strengthen the relation between Tusla and funded services and to support services to work with families in line with Tusla's early intervention ethos.
- (2) A review of all commissioned services in the Midlands area took place with a view to increasing and improving how our funded services react and support service needs arising. Each funded service was reviewed by the Area and PPFS Manager in consultation with PSWs. Changes to service level agreements were made resulting in in some cases, the reallocation of staff to meet the presenting service needs in a particular area and to increase the amount of Meitheals facilitated.
- (3) A review of each Family Resource Centre across the Midlands commenced in November 2019 and is on-going. This review is being facilitated by Tusla National Commissioning in conjunction with the Area PPSF Manager. The purpose of this review is to identify how we can best support our FRCs to meet the needs across the area from a preventative perspective and how FRCs embrace and support Tusla's PPFS model. An additional FRC was developed and funded in 2019 as part of the Tusla's FRC programme.
- (4) A system of regular review meetings between PPFS and PSWs has been implemented. The purpose of these meetings is to review and support the RED process and to encourage a strong working relationship across all teams.
- (5) A review of PPFS caseloads was completed by each Snr. CFSN, with the oversight of the PPFS Manager, with a view to closing cases were appropriate and allowing a more streamlined allocation process for cases being diverted via the RED process.
- (6) A regional PPFS group is established and chaired by the Regional PPFS Implementation Manager (PPFS RIM). This manager reports directly to the regional service director. In 2019, the regional service director attended this group to emphasise that that the priority for PPFS staff is to ensure that RED processes are established, to ensure timely access to families to services by diversion from intake to this process and also to increase the numbers of Meitheals across DML. In addition to this, the regional PPFS RIM is currently observing RED meetings across region to ensure systems are consistent, are of high quality and to ensure the sharing of learning regarding best practice. A date for the Midlands is planned for Quarter 1 2020. In addition to this, cross observation/peer review is also taking place with staff visiting RED meetings in different DML areas to ensure sharing of learning.



Please clearly provide the following data/information:

Use of RED process

In 2019 the area's case diversion process was reviewed to ensure alignment with the national RED process. The frequency of RED meetings increased to fortnightly as opposed to monthly. The meeting location also changed to better meet the geographical spread of the area. All referrals are sent in advance to a designated admin person who then records each referral and sends to all attendees in advance of each meeting. Conference call options have also been set up for referrers so that they can dial in to discuss cases. This makes better use of SW time given the size of the Midlands area and the time spent travelling. The changes have ultimately enhanced the efficiency of the process.

All diverted cases in the Midlands go through the RED process. Cases where families need support immediately from PPFS can be referred by the PSW directly to the PPFS Manager so that a quicker response can be given. The referral is still however logged through the RED process.

The Area is keeping the process under active review. In Q3 2019, Family Welfare Conference (FWC) staff commenced attendance at the RED meetings thus enhancing the access of families to the FWC process. In early January 2002, the PSW for Duty and the Area PPFS Manager attended a RED process meeting in another DML Area for learning and service development. Plans are in place to implement learnings to the area process. Discussion and learning also takes place at the regional DML PPFS meetings (and also at national PPFS core meetings).

In 2019 a total of 171 cases were diverted from Social Work, 98 of which were via the newly aligned RED process, which commenced in August. With the further imbedding of the process and continued area focus on appropriate and timely diversion, it is envisaged that figures for cases diverted during 2020 will increase.

Use of Meitheal process

(1) 108 Meitheals were completed across the Midlands area in 2019. The close working relationship between SW and PPFS and the support from the regional implementation. Manager for PPFS, service director and COO has resulted in a greater use of Meitheal, Family Support and Social Care. This was supported

by the recruitment of two fulltime PFS Child and Family Network Coordinators .

- (2) Meitheal Coordinators visited each funded service across the Midlands in 2019 to support services to use the Meitheal model.
- 3) An audit of the Meitheal process within the area is planned for Q2 2020.

The Midlands					The Midlands	
Meitheal Request	Access Pathways				CFSNs Operating	
	Direct Access	Social Work Diversion	Social Work Step-Down			
Q2 2018	22	20	0	2	Q2 2018	7
Q4 2018	17	15	2	0	Q4 2018	7
Q2 2019	40	33	5	2	Q2 2019	7

Implementation of national RED process practice guidance

In August 2019 the Midlands Area fully implemented the National RED process practice guidance.

TUSLA National is in the process of updating the RED process protocols in conjunction with regional implementation managers. Once these are finalised the area will again align its process to adhere to national.

Assurance is required in the following area:

4. Retrospective Cases

Please outline how the national service improvement project for the management of retrospective cases has impacted on the management of retrospective cases in the Midlands Area.

Please include in your response:

The number of retrospective cases awaiting allocation by priority level as of 31/12/2019

The National Adult Retrospective Audit of cases Allocated and Unallocated April – August 2019 referenced found that the area has a robust system of audits, whereby they have a small number of referrals awaiting allocation.

The area has greatly reduced the numbers on their waitlist and show that they have adopted a strong approach to screening and thresholds. The retrospective workers have received additional training and this is reflected in their ability to process assessments and provide evidence based analytical outcomes to assessments which are undertaken.

The small number of cases awaiting allocation at the time of the audit was specific to a change of Social worker within the team.

As of the end of September 2019 there were no Adult Retrospective cases awaiting allocation.

In October 2019 the DML Regional Adult Retrospective Team was implemented and since then all Adult Retrospective cases from the Midlands, following initial screening by the Area Duty Team, are referred to the Regional Team.

In October 2019, a regional PSW for CASP (and retrospective abuse cases) was appointed to the DML. Currently this PSW reports directly to the Regional Service Director. There will be however 2 additional General Manager posts filled on 17th February 2020 to support the service director in oversight and governance across region (which will include regional teams such as the CASP/retrospective team).

There are currently 5 social workers assigned to this team. There is an additional SWTL post also approved and currently with recruitment for filling. In addition to this, additional training is scheduled for March 2020 relating to risk assessments. This training will be completed by regional staff on CASP/retrospective team but also to staff across areas.

Assurance is required in the following area:

5. Audit of Garda Notifications.

Please outline what follow up has been completed with An Garda Siochana in relation to the above audit in the Midlands Area.

The National Children First Team developed a workshop to support AGS in making more appropriate referrals to Tusla, entitled "*Workshop on AGS Notification and Tusla Response*". The workshop incorporates use of SofS questions to assist members in contextualising and considering the referrals they are making and is run jointly by Children First officers and Area Social Work staff.

In September following receipt of the details of the Workshop, the Area wrote to each of the three Divisional Garda Chief Superintendents inviting them to avail of the workshop for their staff. To date two of the Garda divisions have outlined their wish to avail of the workshop and the area is in the process of scheduling same in collaboration with the Area Children First Officer.

Close liaison occurs between the Area Social Work Teams and Designated Liaison Gardai. The Area Management Liaison Forums are well established across the area and provide an active forum for any issues arising between the two agencies. The forums are operating in adherence to national guidance.

Joint Action Sheet Meetings are also well established which are specific to tracking of intervention of child protection referrals shared by both Agencies.

At the end of 2018, the Area Manager met directly with each of the three Garda Chief Superintendents and all expressed satisfaction regarding working practices between both Agencies. At the end of 2019, the Area Manager issued further requests to meet with the Chief Superintendents in respect of ensuring effective working practices between both Agencies and responses are awaited.

No recent concerns have arisen in respect of the acknowledgement of Garda Notifications and systems are in place to ensure that this occurs. The majority of Garda Notifications are received via the National Portal, which issues automatic acknowledgements. As a further service improvement initiative, the Area has devised an electronic checking system, utilising the National Electronic Recording System, whereby management reports can be run to ensure that all Garda notifications received have been appropriately acknowledged. As of January 13th the Area's NSSIS User Liaison Support Officer / T. Leader commenced in position and monthly reports will now be run and reviewed by the Principal Social Workers to ensure that all Garda Notifications have been appropriately acknowledged.

Tusla has assigned two senior staff to work in Garda national offices in Harcourt Square. These posts are at area manager and PSW grade. These posts holders assists also in ensuring the implementation of Tusla/Garda joint protocol and with governance and tracking of this. The national joint liaison group is also established which includes Tusla's CEO and COO and senior members of AGS.

Assurance is required in the following area:

6. Supports/training initiatives to staff who complete initial assessment and safety planning.

Please outline what supports have been put in place to support good practice and consistency in approach in relation to the completion of initial assessments and safety planning.

Intensive Intake Record (IR) and Initial Assessment (IA) Workshops for the area were scheduled during 2019. The Intensive IA was held over two days in October and was attended by Duty, CPW and CIC staff. The focus of the workshop was implementation of Signs of Safety but with a strong emphasis on analysis and safety planning.

The Intensive IR Workshop was scheduled for two days in November but had to be deferred due to clashing with the National Signs of Safety Gathering, at which the area had three cases being presented. The IR intensive is now scheduled for two days in late January. It will focus on completion of IRs using Signs of Safety but also has a strong emphasis on assessment and diversion where appropriate. The majority of IRs waiting will be reviewed during this process.

Safety Planning Intensive Workshop – In November '19, staff and managers from the CPW service, who had been successful in applying to have a case accepted, attended the National Safety Planning Intensive Workshop which was held over three days. The learning gained will be shared with other staff in the area through area practice intensives scheduled in February and March at which the Regional Practice Support Lead will also attend.

Area Practice Intensives have also been scheduled for January with a specific focus on further skill development in Danger Statements, Safety Goals and Scaling. The Regional Practice Support Lead will again be in attendance.

The Area places a strong emphasis on staff attending Group Supervision sessions which facilitate shared learning but also are a significant support forum to practitioners in completion of assessments.

Individual supervision continues, as per the National Supervision Policy and this provides a further support and learning forum for staff.

Signs of Safety Regional Callback days continued throughout 2019 and are scheduled for 2020. This forum facilitates learning and consistency of practice across the Region.

In 2019 the Regional DML Child Protection Forum was established. The focus of which is practice support while also assisting in standardising practice across the Region in line with national policy and procedures.

A Regional Alternative Care Forum is also in place again with a focus on practice support and standardisation of practice.

The re-structuring of Duty / Intake service into dedicated IR and IA teams enhanced support to staff in that it facilitated less experienced staff in having more dedicated time to focus on skill development in respect of specific components of the assessment process.

The additional Team Leaders in both Duty / Intake and CIC freed up the time of existing T. Leaders to support their staff teams.

Please clearly provide the following data/information:

Specific supports/training initiatives

The area has Well-being / staff retention working group established – the group has a specific focus on implementing initiatives / supports to assist in supporting staff while also assisting in retaining staff within the area. In Quarter 4 of 2019 the group facilitated a staff survey to assist in identifying support initiatives. The outcome of the survey is in the process of being analysed.

How you are assured of the impact of these initiatives on practice and outcomes for children

The area has evidenced a sustained reduction in cases waiting over 2019, specifically at “front door” thus facilitating more timely responses to children and their families. The realignment of the area case diversion process to align with the national RED process has further facilitated more timely response times to children and their families to ensure appropriate referral to support services proportionate to presenting needs. The Themed HIQA Foster Care Inspection in May 2019 did not identify any significant risks and the area evidenced compliance in two standards, substantial compliance in two and moderate non-compliance in two. The area is implementing a detailed Action Plan to address issues identified.

Assurance is required in the following area:

7. Review of current service delivery model

Please provide an update in relation to this review:

The Midlands were subject to a rapid service improvement plan in 2015. As part of this process, a governance and oversight group was also established by the COO and chaired by the regional service director in 2016. These governance structures, coupled with an increase in the allocation of resources in area and strong leadership from the area management team have contributed to the service improvements within the area and included a review of the organisational and service delivery structures in area.

Updates over 2019 include:

- Re-structuring of the Duty /Intake service into dedicated IR and IA teams.
- Re allocation of area resources to allocate an additional T. Leader to Duty / Intake and Children in Care, with a specific focus on cases awaiting allocation.
- Three monthly workshops occurring within Duty / Intake with a specific focus on Medium to Low rated cases waiting and appropriate diversion of same in accordance with presenting needs.
- Increase of Social Care Leaders within the Duty /Intake service to further enhance skill mix and assist in screening and completion of Welfare assessments.
- Temporary filling of vacant Social Work positions with Social Care graduates while waiting to fill with Social work graduates.
- Realignment of the area case diversion process to the National RED process.
- Movement of CFSN / Meitheal Co-Ordinators into TUSLA line management. Area as of 2019, has two fulltime Co-Ordinators to enhancement promotion of Meitheals and enhance support to the seven area PPFS Networks.
- Creation of an additional community based family support service.

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Please clearly provide the following data/information:

The key findings of the review

<p>Specific review carried out over 2019 but area structure is under ongoing review and as required changes to ensure more effective service delivery. These changes are outlined above to response to emerging need. IN addition to this, each area has completed an area profile and the service director uses this, data on service delivery and area demographics, Tusla Outcomes for Children hub to inform resource allocation and planning.</p>
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What measures have been put in place to date to address the findings of the review
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<p>As outlined above, this work is ongoing.</p> <p>It is important to note also that the CEO has commenced making some changes to organisational structures by appointing regional service directors onto the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This is to ensure that operational directorate is strongly represented on this team and to ensure greater connect between Tusla national and Tusla regional/areas. Further changes/announcements relating to organisational structure are expected in Quarter 1 2020.</p>

The expected impact on service delivery arising out of the findings of the review in the Midlands area

As outlined above, the Midlands area has been subject to close review and scrutiny since 2014/2015. The impact on this has included:

- Reduction in unallocated cases
- Improved service delivery
- Greater staff retention and improved staff morale
- Improved compliance with national policies/procedures and standards.
- Changes to organisational structure
- Great emphasis and improved culture relating to children and young people's participation in services and ensuring service users are encouraged to provide feedback to the services they receive.

It is expected that this work will continue within the Midlands.

Assurance is required in the following area:

8. Specific Area initiatives as outlined in the Service Improvement Plan for the Midlands:

The area implemented a number of improvements to assist with addressing cases awaiting allocation and waiting times for same.

- The Duty / Intake service re-structured into dedicated IR and IA teams. This has significantly assisted in streamlining the service in respect of screening and assessment of referrals.
- The increase of SCLs for assisting with screening and completion of Welfare assessments has assisted in enhancing the timely response to children and families.
- Additional Team Leader in Duty /Intake with specific focus on the governance of cases waiting. Duty TL complement now five.
- Three monthly SOFS Intake workshops within the Duty /Intake service with a specific focus on cases waiting rated Low to Medium has assisted in reducing the number of cases waiting and the timely diversion of cases.
- Enhanced relationship with PPFS service and Duty / Intake to enhance case diversion following preliminary enquiry and provide more timely responses for children and their families.
- Realignment of the case diversion process to align with the RED process – Process kept under regular review.
- CCA funding to develop an additional community based family support service – this has enhanced community supports to children and their families and has evidenced the moving of cases from child protection to family support.
- Use of existing staffing resources to create an additional T. Leader within CIC with a specific focus on the governance of cases awaiting allocation.

Please clearly provide the following data/information:

The implementation of self-audits and how the findings of these audits have contributed to service improvement

The area continues to have an Audit Group which is chaired by the Area Manager and consists of the Principal Social Workers and the Manager of PPFS. The group meets quarterly and agrees audit work plans for each individual services, while also sharing learnings from audits completed. As of late 2019 the Regional Quality Assurance and Monitoring Officer also attends.

The restructuring of the Duty / Intake service was guided by the area audit of cases waiting in 2018.

Area audit of High cases waiting in Duty / Intake in June 2019 led to initiative to enhance the governance of H cases waiting whereby the additional Duty TL actively reviews each H case waiting on a regular basis and the cases are further reviewed at supervision between PSW and T. Leader.

Area audits have led to enhanced control measures whereby Business Support staff will return IRs to SW if ethnicity is not recorded. This has evidenced an improvement in the consistent recording of Ethnicity on file records.

Area audits have enhanced the consistency in file chronologies.

Regular joint audits, by the PSW Fostering and PSW CIC of allegations against Foster Carers have ensured timely completion of assessments and enhances the governance of the processes.

Area audit forms are regularly reviewed to ensure they include areas for improvement identified in HIQA Inspections and audits completed by National Quality assurance.

The area completes an annual supervision audit to ensure area is complying with the National Supervision Policy and any gaps occurring.

The area is currently in the process of completing a self- assessment of the CPNS process in compliance with the National Quality Assurance audit process.

Each area in DML is also currently finalising an audit plan for their area for 2020. A draft plan is developed by the regional Quality Risk and Service Improvement manager and this is currently being finalised by areas. It is due for completion by February 2020.

Tusla Practice Assurance Management (PASM) team have also developed an audit plan for each area in Tusla.

The implementation of the area learning plan

The area incorporates learnings from HIQA Action Plans, Case Reviews. National and Area Audits into the Area learning Plan which is reviewed quarterly at the Area Management Team meeting.

There are 3 regional structures in place with regard to sharing of learning and to promote consistent implementation of policies/procedures/standards. These are:

- Regional Alternative Care Forum
- Regional CPW forum,
- Regional PPFS forum

In addition to this, on 17th February, 2 General Managers will commence in DML (reporting to the regional service director) to support capacity for governance, oversight, standardised implementation of policies/procedures and also to support sharing for learning across areas.

The timely completion of notifications of suspected abuse to An Garda Síochána

No current concerns have been identified in respect of the timeliness of completions of notifications to the Gardai. Notifications are completed with the oversight of the Principal

Social Worker. A system is in place whereby Business Support staff track receipt of acknowledgements from the Gardai in respect of notifications forwarded to them and will directly follow-up with the Gardai if notifications are received.

The Area Gardai / SW Liaison meetings, which occur on a regular basis, provide a forum whereby any issues arising between the two Agencies can be raised and actively addressed.

Timeliness of notifications to the Gardai was an Agenda Item in 2019 for the Regional Child Protection Forum and agreement reached to standardise practice across the Region with the approval and oversight of the Service Director.