

COUNCIL
12 MAY 2022

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Children and Young People Portfolio.

Early Intervention and Front Door

2. Training in relation to the approach and work carried out at the Front Door has been completed with 16 Designated Safeguarding Leads, feedback was very positive, previous training has been rolled out to multi-agency partners. Further internal training will be carried out in the next 2-3 months.
3. A new audit programme within CIAT is working well. Team Managers and Advanced Practitioners carry out weekly call and contact audits, findings feed into the overall service wide audit programme. During April 2022 a survey monkey will be sent to all callers to establish their view on the service provided, this will assist in the ongoing improvement journey. Multi-agency audits are also being carried out during April 2022, this will improve the quality of the information shared and will help develop a shared understanding of how best to help and protect children.
4. Harmful Sexual Behaviour practice guidance has been developed with multi-agency partners, this is due to be presented at SLT in April 2022. The guidance will ensure that both the child who has been harmed and the child who has been harmed is considered with a sharp focus on historical childhood experiences; multi-agency information sharing and help and protection that might be needed.

Building Stronger Families Service

5. The Building Stronger Families Service are leading on Early Help Assessments, as well as supporting those led by external partners, there is also support being offered to children and families who are open to social care, offering a seamless service both prior to any intervention to social care and following. The offer includes a range of direct work and targeted and Universal groups with activities across the town, ranging from 0 to 18 years. Health is also engaged and delivering Well Child Clinics from McNay Street hub.
6. Discussions with outreach partners have taken place, with the aim to develop targeted sessions and workshops to meet the need of local communities, for example parenting workshops. The Inspire Program has been a success since launching last summer, and this will now move to different sites around the town to increase availability.
7. The Building Stronger Families Service includes Julie Carter, who is seconded from DWP. Julie offers support to families involved with Early Help Assessments and social care, and can advise on benefits, work, and training. Foundation Housing are also working with the service and are supporting those families with housing issues. We are anticipating some

impact from the fuel crisis and are ready to support families, with McNay Street now holding food parcels to take out to families, relationships with food suppliers across Darlington are in place to assist with this.

8. Following on from learning from the pandemic, all staff will be undertaking some training in use of tools and resources to aid their work with children and young people who have behaviours relating to autism and ADHD. Staff are also completing training in CAPVA to support their work with children and young people who are violent towards parents and carers.

Young People's Engagement and Justice Service

9. Since sharing the School Intervention Menu at the Vulnerable Pupil Panel at the beginning of March 2022 7 schools have made contact requesting help, this has resulted in 5 schools confirming that intervention sessions are taking place over the next few months, there will be a particular focus on emotional management, exploitation and ASB.
10. Victim Support Pathway - the victim group are currently working through their DofE award at a horse academy. This is working very well and the young people are learning new skills while developing in confidence and growing as a team. To date the group have learned how to rug and de-rug, tack and un-track, learnt about different brushes within a grooming kit and what each piece is used for as well as learning how to groom. They have also learnt how to lead and turn a pony without a rider and had a lesson on how to walk, turn, sit, trot and halt their ponies.
11. Out of Court Disposal files are slowly increasing and referrals into the ASB pathway have significantly increased over the past 2 months, this is being managed via group work sessions given and a dedicated staff member delivers this, as well as carrying out their substantive role in the service.

Safeguarding Assessment and Care Planning including Children with Disabilities

12. Following the conclusion of the recent consultation regarding the Life Stages Service review and related structure changes, we are now in a position to confirm that we will progress to implement the structure changes with immediate effect. In practical terms, this will not mean any immediate material change to what have been long standing temporary arrangements.
13. The changes are as follows:
 - (a) The Life Stages Service will be reconfigured to allow a team split into a 0-17 Children's Team and an 18+ Adults Team, each aligned to the relevant service area.
 - (b) Moving forward the teams will be known as Children with Disabilities Team and Adults Learning Disability Team.
 - (c) Both teams will continue to work together to develop best practice for managing and transitioning children's care plans as appropriate.

Looked After and Care Leaver statistics

14. At the end of March 2022 there were:
- (a) 326 children being supported through a child in need plan, which is a slight decrease from 331 at year end 2020/21.
 - (b) 120 children were subject to child protection plans, which is an increase from 87 at year end 2020/21.
 - (c) 273 children in care, 3 of whom are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children; this is a very slight decrease from 272 at year end 2020/21.
 - (d) All 127 care leavers between 16 – 25 years have access to a personal advisor for support, advice and guidance.

Looked After Resources including Fostering, Residential, Keeping Families Together and Family Group Conference

15. Fostering and Supported Lodgings – At the end of March 2022 there were 55 mainstream foster carers and 21 fully approved connected foster carers. There were a further 7 temporary approved carers with children in placement, and 10 where children were not placed. Between April 2021 and March 2022 there has been 9 new foster carers approved and 9 deregistration of foster carers.
16. There was one prospective foster carer in Stage 1 of the assessment process and 5 in stage. There were 8 young people with mainstream foster carers in Staying Put arrangements and 2 young people with Independent Fostering Agency carers. There were 7 post SGO carers receiving varying degrees of support, which includes applications to the Adoption Support Fund to secure funding for therapeutic interventions.
17. Work has been ongoing to prepare for the launch of a Mockingbird constellation of foster carers, which aims at developing strong support networks for a group of foster carers, which in turn helps to maintain placement stability for children and young people.
18. We have been developing a series of self-service reports regarding the fostering recruitment process, and in April we will be able to “run” reports which will provide management information to support a focus on improved practice.

Residential Services

19. Eldon Children’s home will be relocating to a new build house within the next 2 months and work has been ongoing to prepare for this, in terms of preparing documents to enable an application to Ofsted for registration, preparation of the staff team and young people, and preparation and furnishing of the premises.
20. When Eldon Children’s home re-locates, work will progress further to re-purpose the Eldon building into “Cedars” our respite and emergency care unit which will be funded for 2 years. One of the exiting residential managers has expressed an interest in managing

Cedars, and there is a recruitment episode underway to backfill this manager's post on a temporary basis.

21. At the end of March, both Gilling and Dunrobin Children's homes had three young people in placement, so were at capacity. There is one vacancy at Eldon, which will be filled by mid-April. This represents the highest level of occupancy for over 5 years.

Keeping Families Together (KFT) and Family Group Conference (FGC)

22. During March, there were KFT requests for 4 families, and there are 10 families awaiting allocation due to capacity. There have been 24 home visits undertaken with 48 children. Direct work has been completed with 31 children and 72 adults
23. In March there were 25 requests for Family Group Conference support. The referrals form is now built into the Liquid Logic pathway, enabling the team to record and collate data in respect of desired outcomes at the point of referral, and whether outcomes are met at the point of closure.

Corporate Parenting Panel

24. Corporate Parenting Panel last met on 15 February 2022, which was an informal meeting.
25. Chris Bell, Assistant Director provided an overview of the restructure within Children's Services. Bronwen Smith is now responsible for Looked After and Through Care Team, and for Corporate Parenting Panel.
26. The panel discussed the following areas:
 - (a) Summary of 2021-22 Quarter 2 Performance Report;
 - (b) Update on the Care Leavers Covenant;
 - (c) Discussion about Care Leaver's Christmas activities;
 - (d) Update on the Mockingbird project;
 - (e) Update on the work ongoing within the service to form a steering group regarding Unaccompanied Asylum- Seeking Children (UASC). Local Authorities are now mandated to provide placements to UASC referred to them which is challenging given the pressures on placement availability.

Education

27. Haughton Academy was inspected on 1st and 2nd February and the school was judged to be 'good'. Ofsted inspectors noted that leaders and staff have high expectations for all pupils and that pupils enjoy going to school. Skerne Park Academy was inspected on 15th and 16th February. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to 'require improvement', however, personal development and early years provision were judged to be 'good'.

Youth Unemployment

28. The 18-24 year old claimant count for February 2022 stood at 7.8% (570 young people), this is down from a peak of 13.8% (1,005 young people) in March 2021. The Darlington figure is still above the North-East average of 6.2% and the Great Britain average of 5.1%, both of which have also seen improvements. Darlington, jointly with Redcar and Cleveland, has the lowest youth claimant rate in the Tees Valley, where claimant counts range from 7.8% to 9.5%.
29. Young people continue to be supported through a range of local and national employability programmes, including DBC's Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) which runs until 31 July 2023. DWP has a dedicated Job Centre Youth Adviser who is co-located with the YEI team.
30. The economy continues to be buoyant and there are vacancies in a number of sectors. However, some employers are still reporting they are having trouble filling these vacancies.

Children's Commissioning and Contracts

31. On 1 April 2022 two remodelled housing related support contracts went live, these were:
 - (a) The provision of accommodation and outreach support for families, provided by Foundation Housing. The new contract incorporates an incremental increase in the number of properties with designated support for Darlington families from 6 to 12 within the first year of contract delivery. The contract also contains new opportunities for designated support for Kinship Carers in Darlington.
 - (b) The provision of a Positive Support Pathway for young people aged 16-25, provided by Tees Valley YMCA. The new contract includes an additional designated unit of direct access accommodation and the provision of specific outreach support for Care Leavers residing having their first experience of independence in taster flats.
32. The contracts team have been undertaking a programme of contract monitoring visits to external providers of children's residential care services in Darlington. From the visits undertaken to date there have been high levels of contract compliance and evidence of positive outcomes being achieved for young people.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP)

33. Partners were provided an overview of Elective Home Education which highlighted the numbers have gone up, a trend which is being seen nationally with the Pandemic appearing to have accelerated the trend and children being anxious returning to school. Partners were assured of the measures in place to have oversight of these children and relationships with schools is good.

Climate Change

34. Senior Leadership Teams continue to discuss within regular meetings the challenges of climate change and how our services can contribute via change to the overall agenda of

the Council to reduce our impact on Climate Change. A current key focus of this work focuses on our engagement with the Council's agile working pilot scheme. As a service we ensure that through the pilot period we continue to embrace modern ways of working which reduce our carbon footprint including maintaining electronic paperless records, working in an agile way which reduces our use of fuel to travel to and from the office.

Councillor Jon Clarke
Children and Young People Portfolio