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Sefton Council 

MEETING: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING)

DATE: 4th June 2024

TIME: 6.30 pm

VENUE: Committee Room - Bootle Town Hall, Trinity Road, Bootle, L20 7AE

Member

Councillor
Cllr. Judy Hardman (Chair)
Cllr. Danny Burns (Vice-Chair)
Cllr. Leo Evans
Cllr Janet Harrison-Kelly
Cllr. Christopher Page
Cllr. Chloe Parker, NPQH
Cllr . Maria Porter
Cllr. Mike Prendergast
Cllr. Carol Richards
Cllr. Tom Spring
Maurice Byrne, Healthwatch
Mrs Sandra Cain, Independent
Advisory Member
Karen Christie, Healthwatch
Stuart Harrison, Diocese
Gemma Armer, PGR
Michelle Ravey
Cheryl Swainbank, PGR

Substitute

Councillor
Cllr. Greg Myers
Cllr. Jennifer Corcoran
Cllr. Phil Hart
Cllr. Tony Brough
Cllr. Steve McGinnity
Cllr. John Kelly
Cllr. Sam Hinde
Cllr. Dr. John Pugh
Cllr. Joanne Williams
Cllr. Joe Johnson

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Laura Bootland, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Telephone: 0151 934 2078
E-mail: laura.bootland@sefton.gov.uk

If you have any special needs that may require arrangements to facilitate your attendance at this meeting, please contact the Committee Officer named above, who will endeavour to assist.

We endeavour to provide a reasonable number of full agendas, including reports at the meeting. If you wish to ensure that you have a copy to refer to at the meeting, please can you print off your own copy of the agenda pack prior to the meeting.

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are requested at a meeting where a disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest arises, which is not already included in their Register of Members' Interests, to declare any interests that relate to an item on the agenda.

Where a Member discloses a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, he/she must withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest, except where he/she is permitted to remain as a result of a grant of a dispensation.

Where a Member discloses a personal interest he/she must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or staff member representing the Monitoring Officer to determine whether the Member should withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest or whether the Member can remain in the meeting or remain in the meeting and vote on the relevant decision.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

(Pages 5 - 12)

Minutes of the meeting held on *

4. Public Question Time

5. Petition - Complaints Procedure

A petition from The Voice of the Families has been submitted containing 25 signatures. The petition states:

Please can the scrutiny committee investigate the complaints procedure that is currently being offered. Parents have raised concerns over the waiting times, questioned the capacity to deliver the promised services and the impact this has on vulnerable families. Each complaint is individual but there is no procedure to allow several families to jointly raise concerns.

A representative of The Voice of the Families will be allowed to address the Scrutiny Committee on the content of the petition for a period of 5 minutes.

6. Petition - Rights of The Voice of the Families

A petition from The Voice of the Families has been submitted containing 25 signatures. The petition states:

Please can the scrutiny committee support the right of the voice of the families to hold protests, present petitions, meet groups and individuals concerned and dealing with children's services, raise issues and to do this without being targeted, labelled and being the victim of falsehoods by individual councillors and Sefton personnel.

A representative of The Voice of the Families will be allowed to address the Scrutiny Committee on the content of the petition for a period of 5 minutes.

7. Petition - FASD Training

A petition from The Voice of the Families has been submitted containing 25 signatures. The petition states:

Please can the scrutiny committee investigate the issue of the FASD training that it being provided by Sefton for teaching staff, health and social care staff and families. Families are concerned that there is none. Promises of training that does not take place has increased the pain of the families involved.

A representative of The Voice of the Families will be allowed to address the Scrutiny Committee on the content of the petition for a period of 5 minutes

8. Cabinet Member Reports

(Pages 13 -
40)

Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer

9. Family Hubs

(To Follow)

Report of the Assistant Director, Help and Protection.

10. Children's Services Improvement Programme

To receive a verbal update from the Executive Director of Childrens Social Care and Education.

11. Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement

(Pages 41 -
56)

Report of the Assistant Director, Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance.

12. Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23

(Pages 57 -
86)

Report of the Assistant Director, Safeguarding, Review and

Quality Assurance.

13. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CS&S) Work Programme 2024/25

(Pages 87 -
100)

Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer

THIS SET OF MINUTES IS NOT SUBJECT TO "CALL IN".

Overview & Scrutiny

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING)



MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM - BOOTLE TOWN HALL,
TRINITY ROAD, BOOTLE, L20 7AE
ON TUESDAY 12TH MARCH, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Hardman (in the Chair)
Councillor Carlin (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Burns, Carragher, Evans, Harvey,
Page, Prendergast, Richards and Spring

ALSO PRESENT: Gemma Armer, Parent Governor Representative
Maurice Byrne, Healthwatch
Cllr Diane Roscoe, Cabinet Member, Education

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Sandra Cain, Councillor Doyle, Michelle Ravey and Cheryl Swainbank.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Paragraph 9 of the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of personal interest were made and the Members concerned remained in the room during the consideration of the items:

Member	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Councillor Peter Harvey	Minute No. 57 - Cabinet Member Update Reports	His wife works as SENDCO.
	Minute No. 61 - Education Scorecard	His wife works as a SENDCO

55. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024, be confirmed as a correct record.

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56. ATTENDANCE OF THE MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB

At the request of the Committee, representatives from Sefton's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) attended the meeting. Sefton Council, Merseyside Police and NHS representatives gave a brief overview of the safeguarding referral processes for their respective organisation.

The Committee was advised that the MASH provides triage and a multi-agency assessment of safeguarding concerns and brings together a range of agencies in to an integrated multi-agency team.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- How the referral forms used by Merseyside Police align with other forms used by the MASH.
- The different levels of need across the local authorities covered by Merseyside Police
- The suggestion of a pan Merseyside system for level of need thresholds.
- How the working relationship between Sefton and its partners had improved.
- The Vulnerability Hub set up by Merseyside Police

The Committee thanked attendees for their contributions and for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) The update be noted; and
- (2) The development of a pan-Merseyside system for level of need thresholds be supported.

57. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer submitting the most recent update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care, and the Cabinet Member – Education, whose portfolios fell within the remit of the Committee.

The Cabinet Member update report – Children's Social Care, attached to the report at Appendix A, outlined information on the following:

Childrens Social Care

- Early Help
- Monitoring Visit
- Integrated Front Door
- Court Revocation Team

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- Help and Protection Team
- Youth Justice Service

Cared For Children and Care Experienced

- Sufficiency
- Quality Assurance of Commissioned Placements

Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance

- Practice
- Quality Assurance

The Cabinet Member update report – Education, attached to the report at Appendix B, outlined information on the following:

- Delivering Better Value
- SEND
- Inclusion
- School Improvement
- 14-19 Participation
- Early Years
- Virtual School
- School Attendance
- School Admissions
- School Appeals
- Governor Services
- Exclusions
- Pupil Place Planning
- Education Safeguarding

Members of the Committee raised the following queries:

- The issue of school meal provision as raised at the previous meeting on 30 January.
- The increase in EHCP's and the reasons for it.
- SEND dashboard
- Academisation
- School exclusion data

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update be noted;
- (2) a briefing note on the work on academisation be circulated to the Committee; and
- (3) an update from the relevant Team regarding school meal provision be provided for the next meeting of the Committee on 4 June 2024.

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58. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee received a verbal update from the Executive Director of Children's Services on progress made on the Improvement Programme.

Information was provided on the following:

- The latest Ofsted Inspection letter was due to be published on 19 March 2024.
- The ongoing work on the areas identified for improvement by the Children's Services Commissioner.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- The current numbers of agency staff being employed by the Council.
- The processes around making agency staff permanent if they wish to work directly for Sefton Council
- How the Council is working to improve outcomes for care leavers.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

59. SUMMARY OF RECENT AUDIT ACTIVITY

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Quality Assurance and Safeguarding) that set out the summary of quality assurance activity over the last two months.

The performance Scorecard was also included and provided data and analysis of the Key Performance Indicators identified as illustrative of 'system health'.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- Members were pleased to note the greater focus on cases that were graded 'inadequate'.
- The amount of time taken to complete the 'deep dive' audits
- The timeframe until no 'inadequate' practice is being noted
- The quality assurance mechanisms that are in place.
- Reasons for the drop in children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until age 18.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the update be noted; and

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- (2) an update be provided to the Committee at the next meeting on the reasons for the drop in numbers of children leaving care at age 16 who remained looked after until their 18th birthday.

60. OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education) updating on recent Ofsted Inspection Reports and the work of the School Improvement Team.

The following schools had been inspected and reports received during the first half of the Spring Term 2024:

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School
- Crosby High School
- Farnborough Road Junior School
- Springwell Park Primary School
- Litherland High School
- Impact Sefton

A Summary of Ofsted Outcomes and Support during Spring 2024 was attached to the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report

61. EDUCATION SCORECARD

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education presenting the Education Scorecard. The report provided an overview of the data.

The Education Scorecard was attached to the report and set out statistics on:

- Pupil absence rate
- Persistent absence rate
- Pupil exclusions
- Education, Health and Care Plans
- Not in Employment, Education or Training
- National and Sefton Language Data
- Ofsted breakdown by schools
- Early Years Foundations Profile
- Phonics
- Key Stage 1
- Key Stage 2
- Key Stage 4

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Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following matters:

- The drop in the number of requests for EHCP's and the reasons for this
- The fall in disadvantaged pupils at key stage 2 reaching the expected standard
- The employment advice offered to 16–25-year-olds classed as not in employment or education.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the data contained in the Education Scorecard be noted; and
- (2) That a briefing note on the reasons why EHCP's are not approved be circulated to the Committee

62. REVIEW OF THE OPERATION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING)

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services which presented the findings following a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

The main proposals arising from the review were:

- Revised, streamlined Terms of Reference for the Committee which encompass the main focus areas for the Committee.
- A two-year term of office for Co-Opted Members of the Committee, together with attendance conditions of office.
- The establishment of a Children's Services and Safeguarding Parents/Carers Sub-Committee.
- The introduction of a Public Question Time at the commencement of the Committee.

Members noted that as the report proposed changes to the Council's Constitution, the report would also be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 16 May 2024.

RESOLVED: That

Recommendations (1) to (5) set out below be supported and commended to the Council for approval:

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- (1) changes to membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) in regard to co-opted members, together with the proposed Terms of Reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding), as set out at Appendix 2, be approved;
- (2) the proposal to establish a Children's Services And Safeguarding Parents/Carers Sub-Committee, as set out at Appendix 3, be approved;
- (3) a Public Question Time period for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding), as set out at Appendix 4, be approved;
- (4) the Council's Constitution be amended by the inclusion of Appendices 2,3 and 4 of the report;
- (5) the proposals be reviewed in twelve months' time.

63. WORK PROGRAMME KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking to:

- Note the Committee's Work Programme from the Municipal Year 2022/23 and note a new Work Programme for 2024/25 will be developed in due course;
- identify any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan;
- note the informal meetings and site visits to be undertaken in 2023-24;
- note the topic of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was approved for in-depth scrutiny by Members of the Committee during 2023/24; and
- receive an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members of the Committee noted that this meeting was the final meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year and a new work programme would be developed and shared with the Committee ahead of the next meeting scheduled for 4 June 2024.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2022/23, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be noted;

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- (2) there were no items identified for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan that fell under the remit of the Committee on this occasion;
- (3) note the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2023/24;
- (4) the topic of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) be approved for in-depth scrutiny by Members of the Committee during 2023/24 and relevant activities be included in the schedule of the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2023/24, as set out at Appendix B; and
- (5) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	4 June 2024
Subject:	Cabinet Member Reports – Children, Schools and Families		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Children, Schools and Families		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To submit the Cabinet Member –Children, Schools and Families reports relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member – Children, Schools and Families reports relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

Reasons for the Recommendation:

In order to keep Overview and Scrutiny Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No alternative options have been considered because the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

Any financial implications associated with the Cabinet Member reports which are referred to in this update are contained within the respective reports.

(A) Revenue Costs – see above

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(B) Capital Costs – see above

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): None	
Legal Implications: None	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Impact on Children and Young People: Yes	
Any implications on the impact on children and young people is set out within the appendices attached to this report.	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report. Any climate emergency implications arising from the consideration of reports referred to in the Work Programme will be contained in such reports when they are presented to Members at the appropriate time.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: None directly applicable to this report. The Cabinet Member updates provides information on activity within Councillor Doyle's and Councillor Roscoe's portfolios during the previous three-month period. Any reports relevant to their portfolios considered by the Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Committees during this period would contain information as to how such reports contributed to the Council's Core Purpose.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: As above
Commission, broker and provide core services: As above
Place – leadership and influencer: As above
Drivers of change and reform: As above
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: As above
Greater income for social investment: As above

Cleaner Greener: As above

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Cabinet Member Update Reports are not subject to FD/LD consultation. Any specific financial and legal implications associated with any subsequent reports arising from the attached Cabinet Member update reports will be included in those reports as appropriate.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

Contact Officer:	Laura Bootland
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2078
Email Address:	Laura.bootland@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix A - Cabinet Member, Children, Schools and Families – Children’s Social Care - update report

Appendix B - Cabinet Member, Children, Schools and Families – Education - update report.

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 In order to keep Overview and Scrutiny Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

1.2 Attached to this report, for information, are the most recent Cabinet Member reports for the Children, Schools and Families portfolio.

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CABINET MEMBER UPDATE		
Overview and Scrutiny (Children's Services and Safeguarding)		
Councillor	Portfolio	Date
Diane Roscoe	Cabinet Member Children, Schools, and families	06/04/2024

Children's Social Care

Early Help

The 1st May saw the launch of FAST (Family advice and support team). This dedicated team have adopted the conversation model along with the approach taken in Children's Social Care and their role is to support families and professionals to access the Early Help offer across Sefton.

The DfE advisor spent a day within Netherton Family Hub, engaging with families, partners and professionals to gain an understanding of what is working well within Early Help. She commented that she experienced a service which was 'passionate committed and caring. With staff who demonstrated a real caring, family/child centred approach, prepared to go the extra mile'.

Work is progressing in reaching out to partners to encourage co-delivery from our Family Hub buildings with the latest addition being Women's Probation. Further development work, consultation and engagement is also taking place around a potential SEND specialist hub. This would see one of the Family Hubs with an enhanced SEND offer and truly demonstrate multi-agency working across education, early help and health.

Family Group Conferencing team has now completed over 400 conferences. This is an empowering process that supports families resolving their identified issues themselves, facilitated by the Family Group Conference coordinator. The feedback

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from families is incredibly positive. They have recently been trained in restorative mediation and have been using this in their work with families. This allows for families to be supported pre-FGC the hope being that the conference will be a much more positive experience and the desired outcome more likely achieved.

My Space team are working with 34 young people who are at risk of exploitation. The feedback from the young people who have worked with the team has been positive.

'K (mum) was interviewed as part of the feedback offered to NHS England and throughout the interview S (the my space worker) was mentioned, *the way you formed a safe and trusting relationship with A, how you kept mum informed, how responsive you were at times of crisis, how A cried when you ended your involvement* these were just some of many highlights'.

"Thanks for everything E, your support and help is so appreciated and I couldn't have done it without you!"

"Thanks again for everything. You really became a part of the supportive network for J and I couldn't be more grateful! X"

Team around the school pilot has been running since the Autumn term, with a significant

number of families engaging including:

- 4 marketplace events have taken place incorporating partners from a broad range of services
- 200 coffee mornings
- 200 drop in sessions
- 490+ families have been signposted to services or resources through interaction with the service.
- 100+ children have benefitted from direct work sessions encompassing, craft and play, games clubs, 'relax kids', and LEGO therapy sessions.

- 80+ families supported through a 'getting help' assessment – pathway to change'
- 10 staff now trained in Lego Therapy

Monitoring visit/Scrutiny

Ofsted returned to monitor our service for care experienced young people on the 13 and 14th February 2024. Please see link to the final letter outlining their findings [Report template - monitoring visit \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](#)

The headline findings included that “Senior leaders have made steady progress in strengthening a number of areas of practice for care leavers, from a very low starting point. Strides have been taken to positively change the culture of the leaving care service. These changes have improved the attitude and approach, at both a strategic and operational level, to providing support for young people in Sefton”.

They also highlighted the need for improvements for some groups of vulnerable young people. This included the provision of support for those in custody, and earlier effective arrangements to ensure successful transition for those moving from children to adults' services.

Several recommendations were made for future improvement of the service.

These include developing better medium-level mental health support for young people, improving the numbers of those in education and employment, and broadening the choice of accommodation. In addition, there is a need to strengthen the use of findings from audit work, improve the quality of supervision, and ensure personal advisors have enough time to support young people by reducing their workloads.

Integrated Front Door

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Children's Help and Advice Team (CHAT) launched on 1st May. The move to the conversation model of referral has been well received so far and we have had positive feedback from across the partnership. Since going live, we have had 308 telephone conversations and the children and family have been moving swiftly to the outcome. The staff have been extremely positive about the model and all the systems are working well to support this. The phone system is working well with the average call wait time is 0.25 seconds.

Feedback has included:

Designated Safeguarding Lead, Primary School passed on the following:

She is absolutely delighted with the new process and asked me to pass how much better it is being able to speak to someone.

She said she has called a couple of times this week and has found everyone to be extremely friendly and helpful. She went on to say that she feels safe in the knowledge that things are happening when she calls.

Mental Health Matters, NHS:

We used the new CHAT service this morning for the first time and got some really positive feedback from the clinician who made the call. Only waited 2 minutes, felt much more relevant information was obtained through talking, described the social worker / early help worker as 'lovely', our practitioner was really positive about it and we shared this feedback in our managers meeting this afternoon. So great job so far!

We are now focusing on the upcoming monitoring visit. Performance data is reflection of the conversation model and shows how work is moving through CHAT at a steady and consistent pace for children, reducing the delay for children waiting to receive a service.

Help & Protection

There has been successful appointment of existing Sefton practitioners to Team Manager posts in Team 4 and Team Around a Baby. Social workers and a family support worker have also been appointed to TAB which will be operational from June 2024.

There has been progress in all areas of the targeted Improvement Plan developed after the Ofsted MV in November 2023 for the Children with Complex Needs Service, which includes appointment of permanent staff from within the service to more positions including all management positions. Performance has improved considerably over recent months, with a dip following appointment of permanent managers from practitioners within the service. The quality of practice has also improved with a recent dip sample re-audit of CwCN assessments showing many areas of improvement following the roll out of assessment training. There has also been a Good audit within CwCN.

Performance in care proceedings continues to improve with legal permanence being achieved at the outcome of care proceedings for more children, and Sefton performs better than other local authorities in terms of compliance with court directions. Our reputation with the court continues to improve and a Family Justice Improvement Plan has been developed for Sefton.

Youth Justice Service

Cohort summary - There were 93 children accessing YJS services within this quarter, 78% were boys and 36% lived in the most deprived wards. Violence remains the top offence and domestic abuse is the most prevalent adverse childhood experience. 74% of the cohort were open to CSC or Early Help which represents an increase in involvement with wider services. There was an increase in out of court work although the variation is relatively small, and fluctuations are not unusual.

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Re-Offending - In 23/24, 42 children reoffended, compared with 22/23 where 43 children reoffended. The full cohort in 23/24 was 168 children. This equates to 25.0% of children in 23/24 identified as re-offending. The full cohort of children in 22/23 was 167 children. This equates to 25.7% of children in 22/23 identified as re-offending. Therefore, there has been a reduction of 0.7% of children identified as re-Offenders.

Practice Improvement - we are focusing on the quality of practice to improve performance. Audits against the National Standards will be completed monthly across the next year with a focus on 'out of court' work and court orders. Practice Development sessions are held monthly with the team focusing on practice quality. We have arranged Child First training for the team and the Board members which focuses on the key principles which are as follows:

- Seeing children as children
- Building a pro-social identity and developing the child's sense of self
- Collaboration with children
- Diverting from the stigma of involvement in the criminal justice system

Prevention and Diversion

The YJS are delivering prevention work in a number of High Schools in Southport. The work is focusing on anti-social behaviour, drug awareness, knife crime, joint enterprise and violence. In addition YJS are planning the Summer Activities programme to engage children in fun educational activities.

The Turnaround and Community Connector projects continue to support children and they will take referrals until December 2024, as the projects will cease to be funded from the end of March 2025.

Cared for Children and Care Experienced

Unlike most other LA's in the country Sefton has had no children in an unregulated setting since November 2023.

Commissioning

The Commissioning team have now concluded the evaluation of the most recent round of tenders on the Sefton Framework and this has resulted in the appointment of 6 new providers. This furthers our work to establish relationship-based commissioning with providers who share our ambition and vision and to date the framework has allowed an additional 16 Sefton Children living in Sefton with a partner provider delivering to aligned vision, ambition and values to the council.

The fee consultation process for 2024/25 has concluded for our Children's market and final checks and balances are taking place but it is expected this will be delivered within the MTFP expectations for the second consecutive year representing a marked improvement in financial grip. In addition, we are pursuing Block Booking arrangements with newly developed services with the potential to secure a further 11 Sefton beds for Sefton children

We now have no illegal placements, and this continues to be a sustained position.

Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance

In terms of quality assurance, monthly deep dive audit activity continues across Children's Social Care. The rate of work deemed to be inadequate is decreasing (5% in April 2024 – this equating to one inadequate audit) with the majority of work graded requires improvement to be good (58% in April 2024). We are seeing an increasing amount of work being graded good (37% in April 2024; compared with 9% in April 2023). When work is graded inadequate; audits are moderated swiftly; if the inadequate grade is maintained a reflective conversation is facilitated by the relevant Service Manager to unpick learning and ensure any remedial identified actions are followed up to improve the child and families' lives.

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A refreshed audit tool was launched in May 2024; which focuses on Sefton's 5 key practice priorities - Assessment, Plans and Planning, Child Centered Practice, Management Oversight and Supervision and Creating stability and permanence. The focus of audit will be on impact and outcomes, child and family feedback rather than compliance. Observations of practice and Make a Difference interviews continue to help us to spot and celebrate good practice and provide additional opportunities for feedback from children and families.

Work is ongoing within the Fostering Service and Family Group Conferencing Service to embed auditing and thematic dip samples.

Practice Improvement

A comprehensive package of training around plans and planning has been delivered to Social Workers, Managers, IROs and Partners. There is further work planned to support practitioners to improve analytical writing and thinking skills. Managers also continue to benefit from quarterly management oversight and supervision action learning sets which allow peers to show, share, reflect and grow.

Social Work Week was celebrated in March 2024 with learning events focused on plans and planning. Isabelle Trowler CBE, Chief Social Worker opened the week; health and education partners and a Sefton parent supported other learning events. Our International Social Workers offered insights into social work in their home countries on World Social Work day. A culture of curiosity and continual learning is growing in Sefton with quarterly Practice and Performance Meetings taking place and additional Practice Weeks planned.

The ongoing focus of improvement activity remains plans and planning for children, with a comprehensive package of training for Social Workers, Managers, IROs and Partners underway.

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CABINET MEMBER UPDATE		
Overview and Scrutiny (Children's Services and Safeguarding)		
Councillor	Portfolio	Date
Diane Roscoe	Cabinet Member Education	4 th June 2024

SEND

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

- Compliance with the 20-week timeframe for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) currently sits at 35.5% for the year. January and February compliance was less than 30%. This was impacted by annual leave and the statutory deadline for phase transfers. March and April have both been 46% which is more inline with the consistent figures from 2023. The improvement plan for this year is to be at 60% compliance consistently by the end of the year.
- Compliance for Health and Educational Psychology advice being returned continues to be over 90% with Social Care advice being returned within 6 weeks consistently over 70% of the time since September 2023.
- There are also several legacy assessments and annual reviews taking place which have also been picked up, which have affected timescales. There is agreement for two agency casework officers to be appointed for a 6 month period. They will solely work on the backlog of assessments and reviews so that the compliance increases.
- The current number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which are out of time, i.e. have exceeded the 20-week statutory timescale is 140. This is an increase of 36 since last reported.
- A weekly EHCP dashboard has been developed in conjunction with Business Intelligence to enable real time monitoring of performance and blockages. A weekly SEND performance subgroup of SENDCIB is meeting as well as weekly finance meetings.

STAFFING UPDATE

- At the end of December, Lynda Poole was initially appointed as the Interim Strategic Lead for SEND. She has recently been appointed as interim AD for Education Excellence. Lynda has also recently been part of an authority inspected as part of the new OFSTED LAP (Local Area Partnership) SEND arrangements, so brings with her up to date knowledge / experience and challenge to aid inspection preparation.

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- As of January 2024 the SEN Team comprised of 19.5 Casework Officers, but further capacity is required within the SEND service to prepare for the Area SEND Inspection and to deliver the workplans. This includes both administrative and project support. A business case was submitted and approved for additional business support within Education Excellence on a temporary basis

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- **Ofsted:** As of April 2024, 94% of maintained primary schools are rated good or better, with 12% outstanding. 100% of the maintained nurseries, and maintained secondaries are good or better.
- The LA has a new senior HMI, Pippa Jackson-Maitland, who will continue to provide the termly briefings for headteachers - the next being on 24th May at the PDC.

Support for schools:

- A revised 'School Improvement Strategy' document is being developed, that will incorporate the 'Schools Causing Concern' protocols – final amendments will be made over the summer for presentation to stakeholders at the start of the academic year.
- There are 6 schools currently on the 'Schools Causing Concern' protocol: 5 primaries, and 1 PRU. This is a reduction of 1 school since the last report.
- The EE Strategy Day (April) was well attended and received very positive feedback.
- Next year's programme of CPD is currently being planned (including the role of LA partners) with a focus on strengthening links with LA priorities, and using local capacity and expertise.
- KS2 statutory assessment is currently underway – monitoring visits have seen exemplary practice across the primary schools. Writing moderation visits will begin in June.
- **Academisation:** The number of academy conversions continues to place pressure on relevant EE teams and other LA services to meet the DfE requirements.

14-19 Participation

- With regards to the statutory duty to participate in learning post 16, we are currently working with professionals in our Children's Services Directorate, schools, PRU's, and our Home and Complementary Education Services to identify and support young people who at risk of becoming NEET. We will be monitoring progress over the Summer in accordance with our "September Guarantee" requirements which will include ensuring we have sufficient post 16 provision.

Agenda Item 8

- Sefton also still has the lowest NEET and the best tracking performance for young people in the City Region and lower than our statistical neighbour which is Wirral. However there has been an increase in NEET and specifically for our vulnerable groups.
- The application for “Gaps in Provision” funding submitted to the D for E and ESFA on the 30/10/2023 in response to our concerns regarding progression routes for this cohort has been successful. The funding is for 100 places under the Study Programme and there has also been a commitment to fund 100 places for 2024/2025. The places have now been commissioned and three providers have now commenced programmes with the first cohorts: Southport and Hugh Baird Colleges and The Learning Foundry.
- Schools are still making steady progress in achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks in relation to standards for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG). All secondary schools who have been inspected in 2024 have been judged to be meeting their statutory requirements for CEIAG. An Action Plan has been agreed to address the concerns raised in relation to the school that needed to make improvements. We have also been rolling out pilot programmes in relation to Careers Education in Primary settings with a focus on raising aspirations.

DBV (Delivering Better Value)

- Grant application was submitted in July 2023 and grant application was agreed in September 2023.
- Grant funding timescales of spend have been extended until September 25.
- All workstream activities are underway with project leads identified for each area.
- As part of the increase of Inclusion Service/Team capacity, plans to second two local school SENCOs are underway. They will support the development of the Graduated Approach Toolkit.
- The Early Years team has successfully recruited two Inclusion Support Workers and Inclusion Consultants. Some new staff have commenced in post and others are expected to start by Easter 2024.
- Planning for the mapping exercises on the graduated approach for ND and SEMH has begun. This is being facilitated through regular meetings involving colleagues from Education, Health and Care.
- Initial mapping exercises including all stakeholders have taken place in ND and SEMH with a gap analysis being completed.
- The workstream strategic management plan has been formulated and groups are meeting fortnightly to update action logs.
- Using feedback from a scoping exercise carried out by the Educational Psychology team a comprehensive CPD package has been developed. This is being presented to SAPH in April.

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Graduated Approach

- A core group of leaders across partners (health, social care and education) has been established and meets fortnightly in order to maintain momentum and the delivery of the Delivering Better Values (DBV) graduated approach workstream outcomes.
- A mapping exercise for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and the neurodevelopment pathway offer (universal, targeted and specialist) has been completed with partners across schools, the LA, health and social care. Information has been formulated to identify gaps in services and commissioning opportunities. This needs to be scrutinised by the core group and further workstreams identified.
- The Occupational Therapy (OT) sensory work group meets fortnightly to develop the OT sensory offer and is currently gathering data to develop stage 2 of the OT sensory offer targeted support. Mapping exercises are planned for cognition and learning and sensory VI/HI and Physical in the next term.
- The two secondment SENCO position interviews are to be held on the 1st of March. It is hoped that staff recruited to the posts will be able to start immediately. A clearly defined part of this role is to support and develop the graduated approach online toolkit and to support further inclusion capacity.

Staffing Update

- At the end of December, Lynda Poole was initially appointed as the Interim Strategic Lead for SEND. She has recently been appointed as interim AD for Education Excellence. Lynda has also recently been part of an authority inspected as part of the new OFSTED LAP (Local Area Partnership) SEND arrangements, so brings with her up to date knowledge / experience and challenge to aid inspection preparation.
- The Leadership structure across the whole of SEND has undergone a transition process to create stability and leadership going forward, including current members of the service stepping up into interim management roles.
- As of January 2024 the SEN Team comprised of 19.5 Casework Officers, but further capacity is required within the SEND service to prepare for the Area SEND Inspection and to deliver the workplans. This includes both administrative and project support. A business case will be submitted for Business Support within the SEN team to alleviate the pressure within the team and to support improved compliance with statutory timescales.

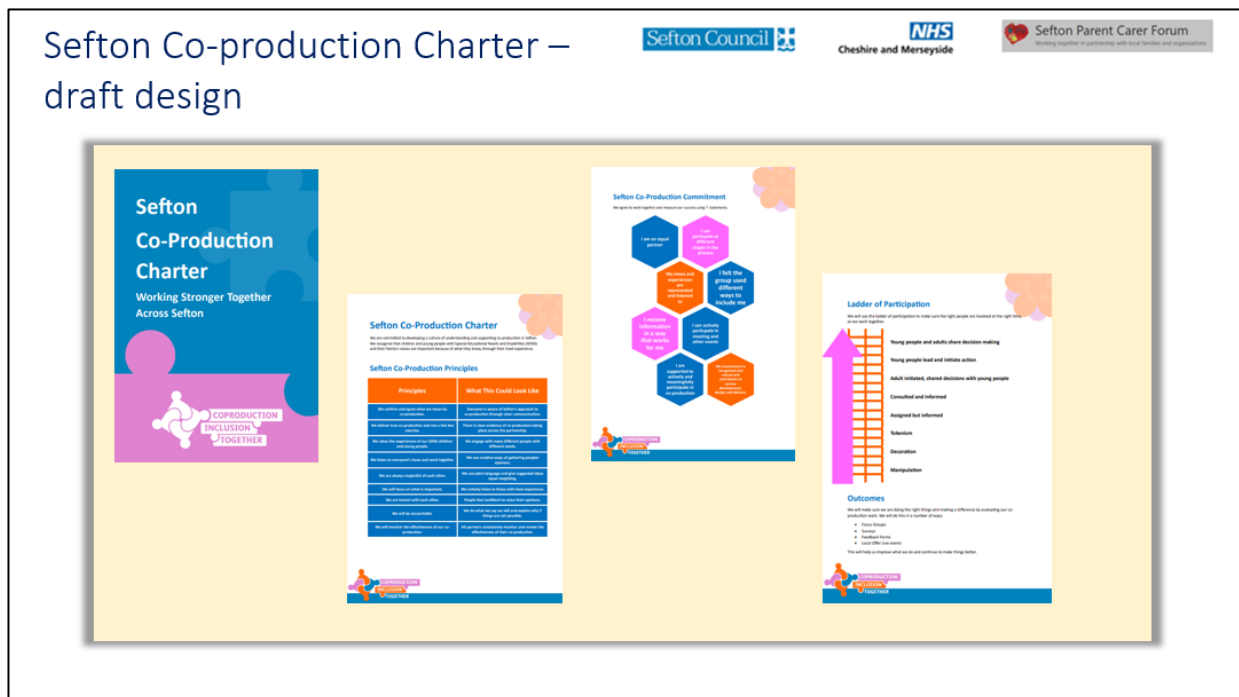
Partnership Working

- A more joined up approach to SEND is required. To facilitate this workplans are being combined into one comprehensive document. This will provide an overview of all the programmes currently underway across all partners, as well as demonstrating the interconnectivity between each strand of work.
- There has been drift and delay with several streams of work due to staff absence.

- Links and relationships with schools and settings are positive, but there is some frustration with stalled areas of work.

Co-production

- The Co-production subgroup ran a logo design competition for the Co-production Charter and the winners of the competition have been selected. The Subgroup with support from Corporate Communications has created a draft Co-production Charter. The draft has been shared across the area partnership for sign off. The Charter will be launched, with a tool kit. Train the trainer training will also be available. A copy of the Charter is included below along with the winning logo design. The Charter will feature at a SPCF conference event in March.



SEND Strategy

- There has been a slight delay with the production of an Area SEND Strategy. However, now that the interim AD is in place, this is being addressed as a matter of urgency. The strategy must be an area wide strategy across Education, Health and Care and must be co-produced with parents, carers, children and young people.

Sufficiency Planning

- Several meetings have been held with Headteachers to collate views on sufficiency of SEND places across the borough, to establish expectations and to map the landscape.
- Data analysis is currently taking place.
- Recommendations and actions are being discussed for the development of the SEND place sufficiency strategy and plan. Working groups with headteachers have been set up and are meeting regularly to strategically plan the short/medium/long term needs for further developing more SEND places within Sefton. Joint weekly meetings have also been set up within the Council bringing together finance, property, admissions, and SEND to drive the growth of places forwards.

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Feedback from OFSTED

- The Childrens Services Ofsted Annual Conversation received positive feedback about the improved stability and recent leadership changes as well as several areas of good practice.

Alternative Provision

- An Alternative Provision (AP) Task and Finish group has been established. An analysis of AP placements has been completed. This includes a mapping of the reasons for the commissioning of individual placements within AP providers and the primary need of those children and young people placed within alternative provision. A QA framework has been developed. The compilation of an AP register is underway.

Exclusions and Attendance

- The Improvement notice has been lifted, but for the first time since 2003, pupils with an EHCP have been excluded. This includes very young children.

Elective Home Education

- 314 children are electively home educated in Sefton with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) being the most commonly cited reason for parents choosing home education.
- 2 full time members of staff have been recruited to the service. This means that monitoring of the arrangements made for children EHE can now take place on a regular basis, currently fortnightly. The aim of regular monitoring is to encourage and support the re-integration of children back into school placements, wherever possible.

Workplan

The work plan for the next 2 months includes:-

- The mapping of all SEND projects and workstreams to identify duplication / shared resources / actions / outcomes and interdependencies.
- The Place Planning SEND Sufficiency strategy – Map and Co-produce strategy and plan with Head Teachers. Identify building works needed for September 2024 onwards and capital funding to create more pupil places in Sefton for September 2024 and September 2025 onwards.
- Alternative Provision - QA all AP provision on a scheduled plan of work, (the intention is to share effort across the CM footprint)
- DBV – Recruit DBV SENCOs
- Graduated Approach - Map universal, specialist and targeted services, identify barriers and gaps
- Area SEND Inspection Annex A – develop action plan to move all “Orange” RAG rated outstanding areas to green. Refresh evidence held to ensure that it is up to date and available for inspection announcement. Preparation for Area SEND inspection continues.

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Inclusion

- Send Inclusion Consultants are supporting the roll out of Relational Restorative Practice model with pilot schools. The team have been to Leeds to visit Carr Manor Community School for an immersion day as part of the offer. The follow up session delivered by Leeds has been booked for the 13th of March.
- The ASD team has supported the Reception Group Model, offering a comprehensive support and training offer.
- Ten schools which have been involved with the joint work with Tor View Behaviour Hub have received their half day visits. DBV funding will support the other 2 days required to support the other schools involved. Good feedback was received about the schools with action points which will inform the development of additionality of training offers from within the teams.
- All the teams within the Inclusion Service continue to support the Team around the School project and the development of the Inclusion and SEND offer.
- The Inclusion Service teams have continued to deliver the training offer.
- Quality Assurance visits to Alternative Provisions (AP) are underway. Inclusion Service teams are supporting these visits.
- The Hearing Need and Visual Impairment team facilitated a Merseyside and Cheshire training event on Ushers Syndrome.
- Group funding reviews have started to look at the how funding has been allocated to schools and the effectiveness of the model.

School Improvement

- **Ofsted:** As of 26th January 2024, 95% of maintained primary schools are rated good or better, with 12% outstanding. 100% of the maintained nurseries are good or better. All maintained secondary schools are now good, with Christ the King Catholic High improving from RI in their November 2023 inspection.
- The SI team continues to support Headteachers' well-being with an offer of support to all schools in the Ofsted window – this includes a website compliance check, a conversation with governors, support for subject leaders and health checks in SEN, inclusion and curriculum. This support is provided by the SI team, professional partners and the appropriate EE service, and there has been a good uptake.
- All schools are being encouraged to attend the termly briefings provided by our regional senior HMI, the next being on 1st March.
- **Support for schools:** Keeping in Touch (KIT) meetings between schools and their professional partner continue; all reports are quality assured by the SI team and common themes or concerns identified.

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- The Schools Causing Concern protocols have been reviewed and amended in light of new DfE guidance, and to ensure our criteria and processes are robust; these have been approved by the School Improvement Board.
- There are 7 schools currently on the 'Schools Causing Concern' protocol: 5 primaries, 1 nursery and 1 PRU. This is a reduction of 3 schools since the last report.
- **Academisation:** There has been a rise in the number of schools converting to academy status - currently 16 either confirmed or awaiting confirmation. This is placing relevant EE teams and other LA services under pressure to meet the timelines set by the DfE.

14-19 Participation:

- With regards to the statutory duty to participate in learning post 16, Sefton is still ranked first in the LCR and Northwest with 91.2% of young people moving into full time education.
- Sefton also has the lowest NEET and the best tracking performance for young people in the City Region and lower than our statistical neighbour which is Wirral. However there has been an increase in NEET and specifically for our vulnerable groups.
- The application for "Gaps in Provision" funding submitted to the D for E and ESFA on the 30/10/2023 in response to our concerns regarding progression routes for this cohort has been successful. The funding is for 100 places under the Study Programme and there has also been a commitment to fund 100 places for 2024/2025. The places have now been commissioned with a view to immediate referrals and starts.
- Schools are still making steady progress in achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks in relation to standards for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG). All secondary schools apart from 1 who have been inspected in 2023/2024 have been judged to be meeting their statutory requirements for CEIAG. An Action Plan has been agreed to address the concerns raised in relation to the school that needs to make improvements. We have also been rolling out pilot programmes in relation to Careers Education in Primary settings with a focus on raising aspirations.

Early Years

- The Early Years Transition Event was held on Monday 13th May at Formby PDC and was a great success. We had 122 attendees from 90 schools and settings. Feedback from the event was very positive.
- The Early Years service has been collaborating with MVRP (Merseyside Violence, Reduction Partnership) on a number of projects. The ambition of the projects are to target WARDS to implement a place-based approach, targeted at Early Years children and families. The pilot will implement a range of 'preventative' interventions and programmes aimed at raising outcomes for children and families to reduce the risk of future criminality and violent offending.

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- MVRP Evidence Hub identified the following wards: **Church, Derby, Ford, Linacre, Litherland, Netherton and Orrell, St Oswald**. Following a meeting Sefton, MVRP added **Cambridge** Ward into the initiative. We are looking to continue this work next academic year. Focussing on working closer with parents and Early Years Advocates campaign.
- We have successfully supported a number of our private nurseries and childminders to move from inadequate or requires improvement to 'Good'. The LA staff working with them have been very supportive and challenging in ensuring they were all fit for inspection and that the children are receiving good support. 98% of our private providers are either rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- Our Early Years SEND requests for involvement from the service continues to increase, and we have roughly 900 children currently supported across the Early Years SEND service with 172 Early Years Children accessing high needs funding (HNF).
- As part of the DBV work we have recruited two Early Intervention Officers who will support PVI and childminders on Early Years inclusion on a holistic level and will not carry a caseload. We have also recruited, three further Inclusion consultants to support with school inclusion in Reception on a holistic level and will also not carry a caseload. All staff are now in post and are collaborating with settings and schools in preparation for academic year 2024/25.
- The Early Years Service have been chosen by the DFE to be part of a pilot for 'Early Years workforce incentives. We have had our delivery plan agreed and comms and marketing regarding this will begin in the next few weeks. We have sent out our application forms to those eligible settings and they can then begin their recruitment process. As part of the offer for this, we are offering settings the opportunity to be part of a Health and Well-being accredited project that will support recruitment and retention of staff.
- As part of the roll out of the expansion of childcare, the Early Years service have been working closely with the sector, parents and other professionals on mapping supply and demand in regard to the new entitlements. Kim Evans is Project manager for both expansion of childcare and Wraparound agenda. We have actions plans that are reviewed on a weekly basis.
- Our application form for Capital funding and programme funding is with our legal team and we hope to share this with providers in the next couple of weeks.
- We have launched a number of radio campaigns for recruitment and retention, wraparound childcare and expansion of childcare – all within sefton leisure centres.

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The Virtual School

- Early Years Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are now being populated, with the first deadline being 22nd March, 2024. The Early Years team and Virtual School are collaborating to ensure that all Cared For children from the age of 2 have a PEP that will be reviewed each term. Already, this has had an impact on applications for schools, which will be completed in a timely manner and following discussions about choosing a school that best meets the needs of the child.
- Following the launch of the FE College and Virtual School Partnership Agreement, we are seeing improved stability in terms of young people remaining on courses or changing to a more appropriate course if they are unhappy. The ESOL course that was developed following the successful summer school is popular and provides a much-needed education and social network offer to our UASC students.
- Wellbeing continues to be a significant area of need. In addition to our commissioned Well Young Person provision, Pupil Premium Plus funding has been used to pilot an ACEs course for care experienced young adults. We are about to collect the impact reports from the school projects funded in the last academic year and we are already aware of the positive impact of modest investment in projects that target wellbeing and attendance in schools. Further funding for projects that promote wellbeing, inclusion or attendance will be offered to schools at the Education Excellence day in April.
- The Foster Carer Conference (sponsored by Sefton Virtual School) will be held in October 2024 and the theme is Education. The Virtual School is assisting with planning the activities.
- Our Sefton Superstars event (22nd March) will be a red-carpet, glittering celebration of the achievement and effort of our children. There will be performances from school choirs and our drama group, and the event will be compered by one of our alumni.
- The quality of PEPs continues to improve, and the return rate has been 92% for the last two terms.
- Attendance is, overall, above national average. However, there is still a concern about Years 9-11. A strategy is in place to address this: those with the lowest attendance are being visited by their Education Coordinator this term to ensure that we capture the voice of the child and offer challenge and support to the child, carers and schools.
- Finding appropriate schools for children with EHCPs continues to be a challenge. The Virtual School is working closely with the Sefton SEN team and is also in regular contact with other LAs to minimise delays. The Sefton VHT also works with the AD for Children in Care to ensure that education is prioritised when planning where a child will live and to promote colleagues' understanding of the protective factor of school attendance and stability.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- The tables below detail Statutory School Age Children (Year Groups Reception – Year 11). These children attend Sefton Schools including those living in neighbouring LAs travel into Sefton. Sefton council have a statutory responsibility for school attendance in Sefton schools irrespective of where the child lives.
- The information also include characteristics of children who have an EHCP and children who receive SEN Support and those in receipt of free school meals.
- Persistently Absent relates to children with between 50 and 90% attendance.
- Severely Absent relates to children with 50% less attendance.
- FSM = Free School Meals.
- CLA only refers to children attending a Sefton school despite which LA they live in and who are statutory school age i.e. children who are Nursery age and Post 16 are not included in this report.

All Schools.

Overall.

- 38 134 children on roll.
- Overall Attendance is 92.2%.
- Overall Absence is 7.8%.
- 7 985 children (20.9%) identified as Persistently Absent.
- 794 children (2.1%) identified as Severely Absent.

EHCP.

- 1 938 children have an EHCP.
- Overall, 5.1% of children have an EHCP.
- Overall Attendance is 87.1%.
- Overall Absence is 12.9%.
- 564 children (29.1%) identified as Persistently Absent.
- 115 children (5.9%) identified as Severely Absent.

SEN Support.

- 6 254 children have been identified as receiving SEN Support.
- Overall, 16.4% of children receive SEN Support.
- Overall Attendance is 88.5%.
- Overall Absence is 11.5%.
- 1 859 children (29.7%) identified as Persistently Absent.
- 301 children (4.8%) identified as Severely Absent.

FSM.

- 10 562 children are in receipt of FSM.

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- Overall, 27.7% of children receive FSM.
- Overall Attendance is 87.8%.
- Overall Absence is 12.2%.
- 3 653 children (34.6%) identified as Persistently Absent.
- 479 children (4.5%) identified as Severely Absent.

CLA.

- 467 children are a CLA.
- Overall, 1.2% of children are a CLA.
- Overall Attendance is 92.1%.
- Overall Absence is 7.9%.
- 79 children (16.9%) identified as Persistently Absent.
- 15 children (3.2%) identified as Severely Absent.

The Service Manager for school's support services will be undertaking the targeted meetings at the secondary schools to ensure there is an attendance plan in place for these children with 50% attendance and below.

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS UPDATE

- The national offer day for secondary schools preferences will take place on 1 March 2024.
- Two schools in the South of the borough have been inspected and having a good judgement should increase confidence.

APPEALS

- There have been 219 appeals prepared since September 2023. All shortages of places are now admitted through the in-year fair access panel.

GOVERNOR SERVICES

- The Governor training programme for the spring and summer term has been distributed.

EXCLUSIONS

- Up to 17th February 2024 – 6,358 sessions lost to fixed term exclusion across 840 pupils.
- Up to 17th February 2023 – 4,065 sessions lost to fixed term exclusion across 637 pupils.
- There is an increase both in the pupils and the number of sessions. An inclusion strategy is being procedures with parents and partners.
- Exclusions continue to rise both across the northwest and the count in exclusions.

PUPIL PLACE PLANNING

Reception (Primary) entry 2024

- We do not currently envisage any issues in sufficiency for this cohort. Preferences have been received from other LA's and including those application there does currently appear to be sufficient places in all areas to allocate places in reception to those who have applied. At this point there appears to also be sufficiency for alternative offers for the oversubscribed schools in each area of the borough. Maghull would have been of a slight concern however preferences for Lydiate Primary are low this year so those who cannot be allocated their preferences for other Maghull schools may be offered Lydiate Primary even though it might be a little further away from their home address. There is a significant amount of housebuilding in this planning area so numbers will increase in the future.

Secondary (Year 7) entry 2024

- 10 of the 18 secondary schools within the borough have agreed intake numbers in excess of their PAN for 2024. Mainly this applies to oversubscribed schools, although some have first preferences below PAN overall they will be filled using the equal preference scheme. Without these increases we may have struggled in some areas particularly within the Southport area. There has been a lot of new housing built in close proximity to two Southport secondary schools (Christ the King Catholic High & Meols Cop High). Much of this housing is situated in the Lancashire LA area however the housing sits right on the border with the Sefton and the Sefton schools are much nearer than any Lancashire schools are. As you can imagine may cause some issues for our residents.
- **Bootle/Litherland area** remains an overall concern for secondary admissions. The number of children in Year 6 at primary schools in this area (826 from October census) is much higher than the number of year 7 places available (590). This has been the case for a number of years due to school closures and the remaining schools in the area reducing their PAN's. The figure of **590 for 2024** is only possible as two academy schools have agreed an intake number above their PAN (Hillside High & Kings Leadership Academy Hawthornes). Historically we manage the allocations in this area as many children prefer schools in the Crosby or Maghull areas and some also opt for Liverpool LA schools, as it is very close to the Liverpool border. We also use the option of filling an undersubscribed school in Crosby for children in this area who cannot be offered their school(s) of choice, as generally that school is within 3 miles distance of the home addresses. We will do the same in 2024 to meet demand.
- The PAN for **Litherland High School** in particular remains a concern & we have raised this previously with the DfE.
- The school was rebuilt in 2011 to accommodate 240 per year group this considered the closure of Bootle High in 2009. Litherland High took over the feeder primary schools previously aligned to Bootle High (some of which have since closed) plus the existing feeder schools for Litherland High. More recently in the Bootle & Litherland areas, 3 High schools closed or have been merged (St Wilfrid's, St George of England & St Ambrose Barlow). Litherland High now has 7 feeder primary schools within their admission arrangements.

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- Litherland High's funding agreement from when they became an Academy states the school's capacity as **1,200** which gives an indicated admission number of 240 across the 5 year groups. The PAN was reduced in 2019 at the request of the school - presumably due to surplus places. Since 2019 demand for places at Litherland High has increased substantially. The LA understands that a Deed of Variation was made, in line with the arrival of Litherland Moss Primary School onto the same site in September 2022, which reduced the schools capacity to 750
- The school now has a PAN of **150**.
- In 2024 for the third year running the LA will not be able to allocate places to all of the children who attend Litherland High's 7 feeder primary schools. The result obviously is complaints & many admission appeals. For this reason the LA and the general public do not feel that this school is no longer serving the needs of local children. If possible we would like to request that this school is prioritised within the programme of revised net capacity assessments for academy schools as we are getting both parents and our appeals panels questioning as to why the PAN has reduced so much as they feel even with the primary school being on site the PAN should not be as low as 150

Education safeguarding

- All schools inspected since September have had effective safeguarding arrangements in place.

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	4 June 2024
Subject:	Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Children's Services (Quality Assurance and Safeguarding)	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Children, Schools and Families		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt Confidential Report:	No		

Report – Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement

This report will provide an overview of Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement activity between February and April 2024 in Sefton Children's Social Care. In addition to this, it will set out audit performance over the last 12 months offering a view of direction of travel and areas of focus. Alongside the 'deep dive' audit activity which takes place each month, an increasing amount of focused dip sampling and quality assurance is now taking place. This work is undertaken as a result of lines of enquiry opened by performance data, or the need to evaluate or understand a discreet area of practice. Make A Difference interviews are also arranged to drill down on what contributed to achieving good outcomes for children and their families.

Audit judgements - last 12 Months

The chart below summarises activity over the last 12 months; it provides a wider context and shows gradual improvement over time. There is clear evidence that the amount of work graded Inadequate has reduced significantly over the last 6 months. Most work audited across the service continues to be considered Requires Improvement to Be Good overall, but work identified as 'Good' is increasingly becoming a feature with 'Good' judgements noted every month in the last 6 months with some domains graded outstanding. Positively, 37% of work audited in April 2024 was judged 'Good' which is the highest figure recorded since the Quality Assurance & Impact Framework was launched in October 2022.

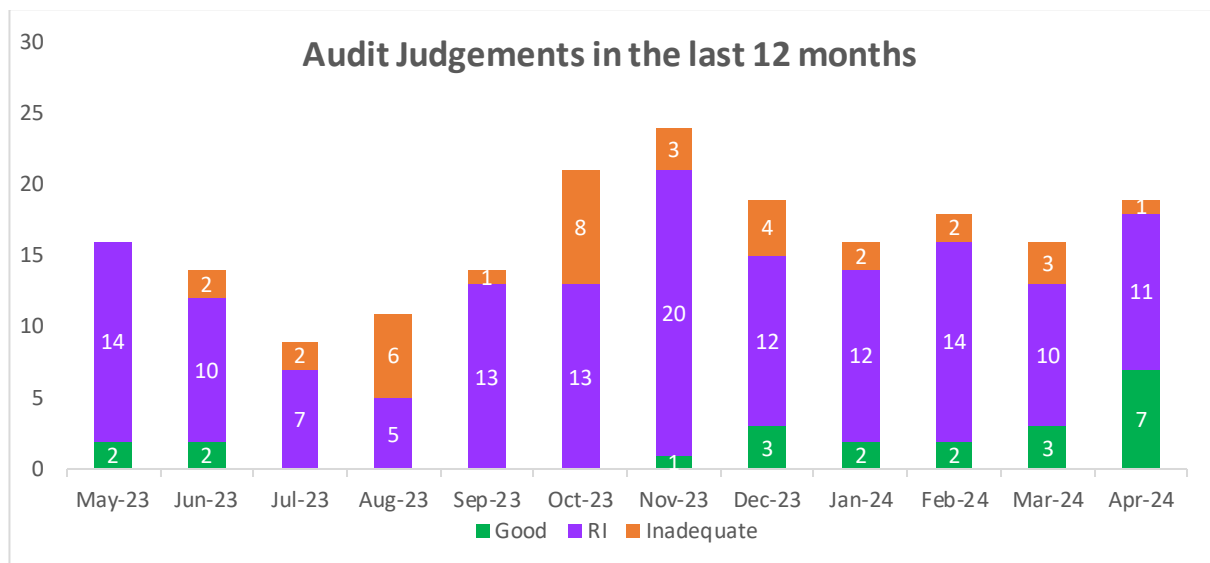
In April 2024, we launched a refreshed audit tool which removed some audit domains linked specifically to recording and other aspects of compliance. These areas were important to consider at earlier points in our improvement journey as we needed to embed basic practice standards. The refreshed tool now focuses on the 5 practice principles, and specifically, the outcomes for the child and family. This shift coincides with more audits being scored 'Good' overall in the month. The tool may have

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influenced this shift but also this may reflect improved practice and outcomes which we have begun to see over time. 50% of the audits judged 'good' were moderated to ensure consistency of grades and, encouragingly, all were upheld. There will be increased moderation over the coming months while the new tool is embedded so we are confident that our good grades are such and we are not becoming overly optimistic.

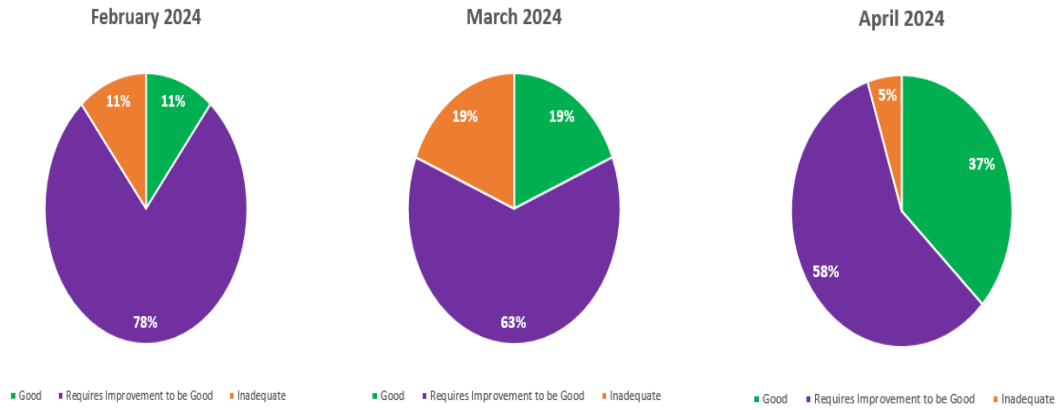
Sefton's improvement plan identifies 5 'practice principles' which are:

- Assessment
- Plans and Planning
- Child Centred Relational Practice
- Management Oversight and Supervision
- Creating Permanence.

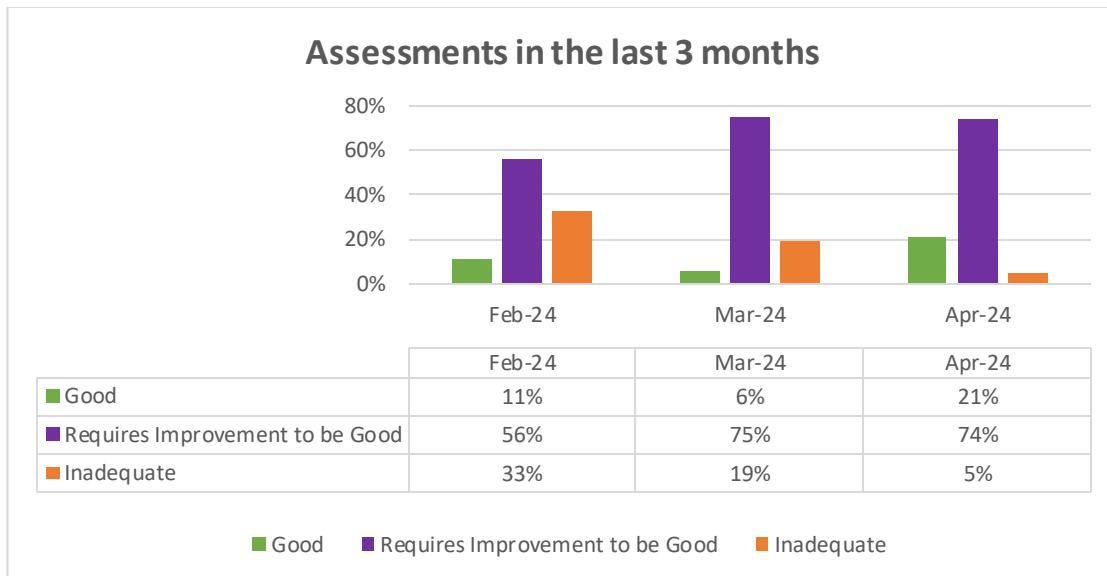


Recent Audit Activity – February 2024 to April 2024

Since the last report, **53** deep dive audits have been completed across Children's Social Care (Feb24-April 24). **19** of these audits were moderated (**36%**) which resulted in **4** audits being downgraded to 'Requires Improvement to be Good' or 'Inadequate' and 1 audit upgraded to 'Good' following moderation. The green sections of the pie charts indicate % of good grades.



Assessments



What do we know?

- Positively, most assessments are completed in timescales and the quality of assessments is improving (see direction of travel chart above.)
- Better quality assessments show evidence of effective collaboration with family members and relevant multi-agency partners to understand the child’s lived experience and support a clear plan for the child.
- Increased evidence of recent assessment training being used to inform assessment work.

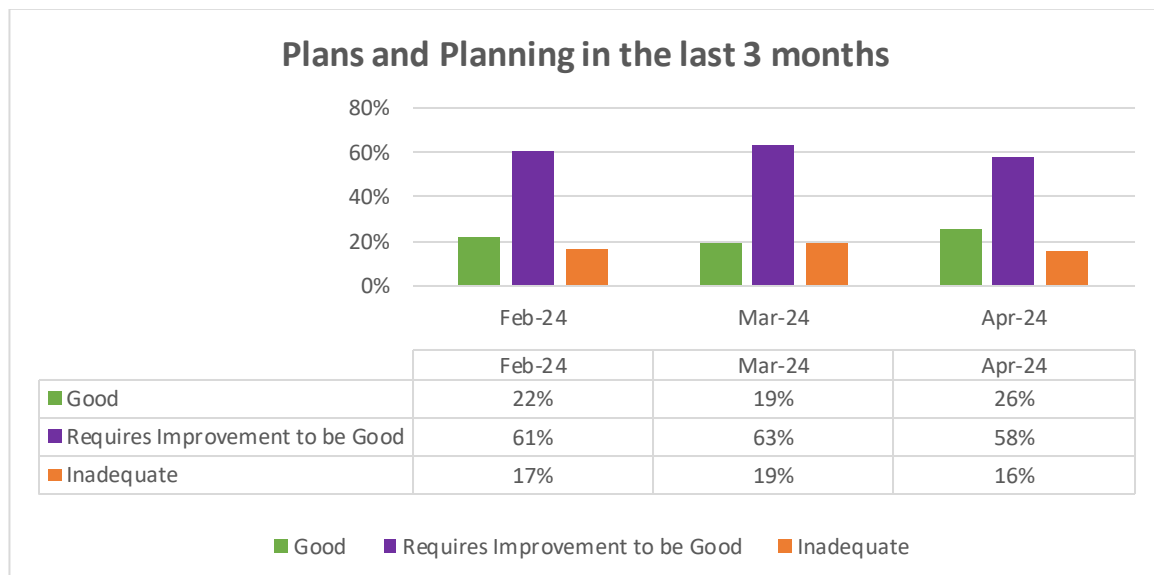
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- In many assessments, a more in-depth analysis is needed to pull together all known information about the child and family including from previous assessments to consider ability to make meaningful change and form the bridge to a SMART plan.
- Weaker assessments lack depth; they do not consider fully, the complexities of family and peer relationships, the family history and the parent's own childhood experiences and how these impact on parenting and the child.
- Following significant events or changes in circumstances, assessments are not consistently being updated; meaning information is lacking in terms of the child's current needs. This continues to be a feature in audits.
- Significant learning from this audit period shows that fathers are not being consulted equally with little, or no attempts made to contact the child's father to inform the assessment and gather their views.

Impact of any improvement or learning activity

- Good assessment training has been created and rolled out to relevant teams between August – December 2023. Comparing grades for domain area linked to assessment; improvement is evident and confidence in assessment work appears to be growing. There is also improvement noted in terms of management oversight and quality assurance to improve quality of assessment.
- As more assessments are completed, the impact of this training combined with plans and planning training should evidence continued improvement. This will be monitored through ongoing quality assurance and feedback from children and families.

Plans and Planning



What do we know?

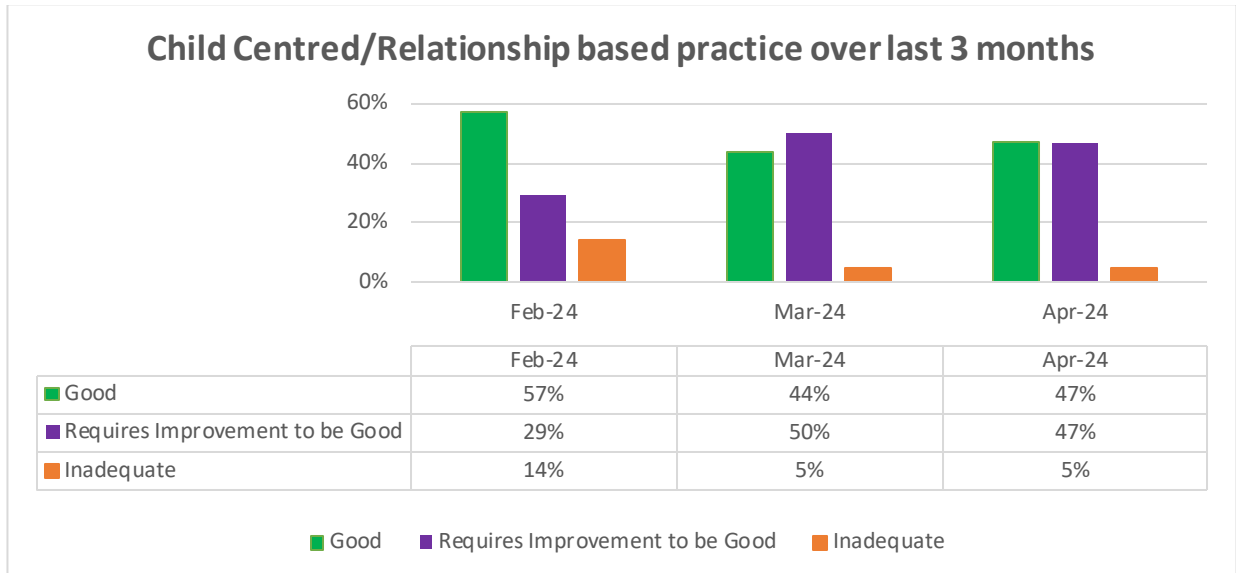
- Positively, parents and carers told auditors that they feel supported by their Social Worker and involved in planning for their child. There was one example of a parent receiving reports on coloured paper specific to their needs which enabled her to fully participate in meetings.
- Examples of strong multi-agency planning and partnership working which kept the young person safe and improved their outcomes.
- A number of examples of clear, SMART CIN plans co-produced with support from the CIN IRO's.
- In weaker plans, they are not specific enough and do not include timebound actions to support the child and family and remove barriers to permanence.
- Like in assessments, fathers are not always involved in meetings and planning for their child. The responsibility for change can be disproportionately assigned to mothers with little intervention with the child's father who often poses the risk. This has been a reoccurring theme over time with targeted learning to address this back in Social Work Week 2023.
- Irregular multi agency meetings contribute to plans drifting and delays in the child and family receiving the right support. Drift is not always challenged by partners.
- It is not always clear how partner agencies are contributing towards the child's plan as information is not always shared or there is a lack of analysis of work completed so it is hard to measure impact.

Impact of any improvement or learning activity

- Good assessment training links assessment to planning. Additional training on planning has been rolled out between February – May 2024 with positive feedback received. Further plans are in place to support critical thinking and analysis as we know that many practitioners struggle with this aspect of practice.
- There was a focus on plans and planning during Social Work Week 2024; with good practice examples being shared in respect of Missing Trigger Plans, Pathway Plans, Easy Read Plans, Early Help Whole Family Action plan and a learning session on safety planning with input from a Sefton mum to bring her experience alive.

Child Centred Practice/Relationship Based Practice

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What do we know?

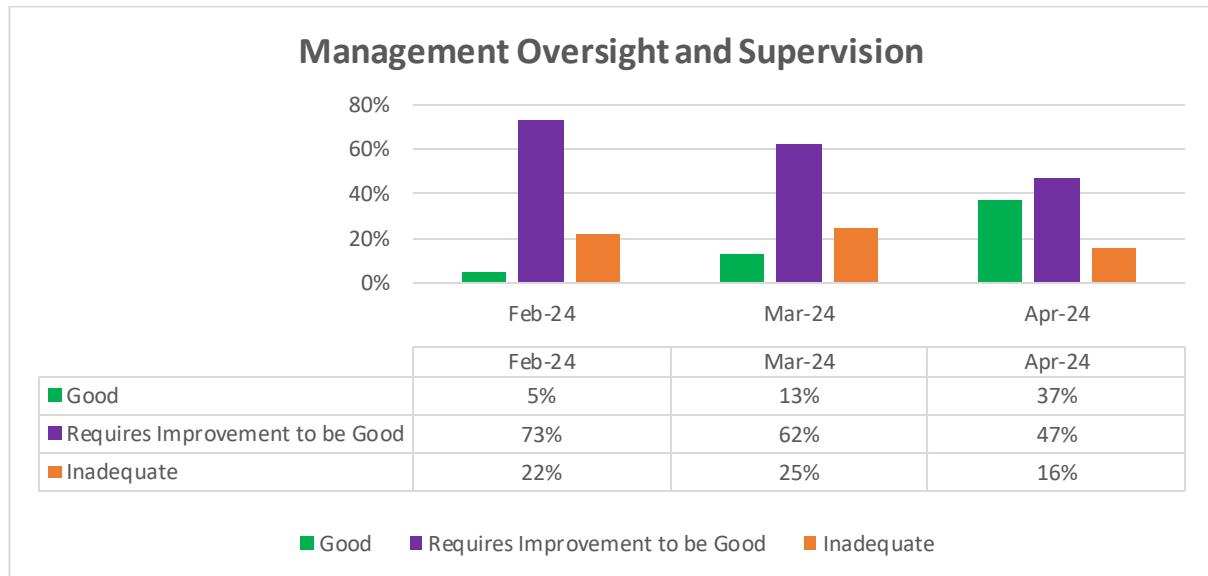
- Direction of travel information above identifies consistent good work in this domain.
- Positively, visits to children and young people are regular with more examples of recordings that show purposeful visits linked to the child's plan. Those children and young people who had consistent relationships with professionals were able to build good relationships and complete regular meaningful work with increased evidence of direct work tools being used to support communication.
- There were some examples of good transitions when workers changed with joint visits to enable the new worker to develop a positive relationship with the family.
- During feedback conversations, parents and carers spoke highly of their child's Social Worker and the support they had received which has supported progression of plans.
- Again, there is little evidence of efforts to consult or build relationships with the child's father and other significant males to aid them to understand the expectations on them as a parent and complete meaningful intervention work/ utilise strengths or increase support.
- There is not always a full understanding of the wider family network to aid contingency planning.
- More direct work with the child/young person would ensure their daily lived experience is understood. Sometimes when direct work is undertaken; this is not analysed to consider impact and review how information gathered can support the plan.

Impact of any improvement or learning activity

- Leeds colleagues have over the course of the last 2 years supported Sefton to embed a family valued approach to practice. Child Centred/relational practice continues to be a strength. Recent training in good assessment and plans and planning plans has reinforced messaging around relational practice. More work needs to be undertaken to emphasise the importance of involving fathers in all that we do; in particular understanding their rights, responsibilities and their potential.

- During Social Work Week in March 2024; we brought people together for further learning; with family feedback being shared and a Sefton mum joining one session to share her own lived experience. Our Virtual School also delivered a session on child centred inclusive practice and outstanding practice examples noted within our Care Experienced team were celebrated to further raise the bar. Good is what we expect as standard and so we wanted to show what people have done to go above and beyond and the impact of this on connection and relationships.

Management Oversight and Supervision



What do we know?

- Positively, supervision is taking place regularly across the service and largely within expected timescales. Also, there is evidence from recording that managers have a good knowledge of the families practitioners are supporting.
- Stronger supervisions evidence the manager reviewing actions set at previous supervisions to progress the plan and also using reflection and testing out hypothesis.
- There is also regular oversight of the child's plan by the IRO/CIN IROs to move actions forward.
- There is not always challenge evident from the Team Manager when actions in the child's plan are not progressing or curiosity by Senior Managers when there are significant gaps such as the father not being contacted/consulted.
- Although management oversight is present at key points, this would benefit from adding timebound actions and analysis to show impact on the child.

Impact of any improvement or learning activity

- Leeds colleagues have worked with Team Managers and others to improve practice leaderships skills by facilitating Team Manager training and action learning sets on management oversight and supervision. Sessions have involved managers sharing examples of management oversight and supervision records with others for review and feedback (show and share

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approach) and these sessions continue in Sefton today; facilitated by the Principal Social Worker (22 managers in March 2024). In April 2023, no audits were graded good for this domain; compared to 37% in April 2024 showing gradual improved progress. We expect this aspect of practice leadership to continue to improve and will focus more energy on understanding supervision graded inadequate.

- All managers are now engaged in audit; managers tell us that by doing audits themselves and reviewing the work of colleagues; this allows them to reflect upon and improve their own oversight. Feedback from the annual staff survey echoed this point also.

Impact and Outcomes (Creating stability and achieving Permanence)

What do we know?

- Consistency in professionals and good partnership working has reduced risks for the child/young person and has allowed for effective scrutiny and review of the child/young person's plan.
- Evidence of children and young people happy and thriving with those who are caring for them and understanding their plan for permanence.
- Examples of parents being fully involved in assessments and planning from the outset which has resulted in a family led plan.
- The main barrier to achieving permanence is that plans are not SMART and do not show clearly the progress being made to improve the child/young person's outcomes.
- Delays in assessments means that permanence is not achieved in the right timeframe for the child/Young Person.
- A greater understanding of the family network is required for contingency planning and decision making around permanence. Increased use of Family Group Conferencing would aid this.

Impact of any improvement or learning activity

- Practice & Performance Meetings bring practitioners and managers together on a quarterly basis. The focus of the meetings in March 2024 was on Plans and Planning where we showcased good plans from across the service.
- In addition, a refreshed audit tool with greater focus on permanence and learning to improve outcomes for the child/young person was launched on 01.04.24.
- An audit tool is also being piloted to consider practice within the Fostering Service and Family Group Conferencing Service to see how this work can contribute to achieving permanence for children and young people.

What children and their families are telling us

Auditors spoke to **2** care experienced young adults and **3** children/ young people between February 2024 and April 2024. Any negative/constructive feedback is highlighted in orange boxes. They told us:

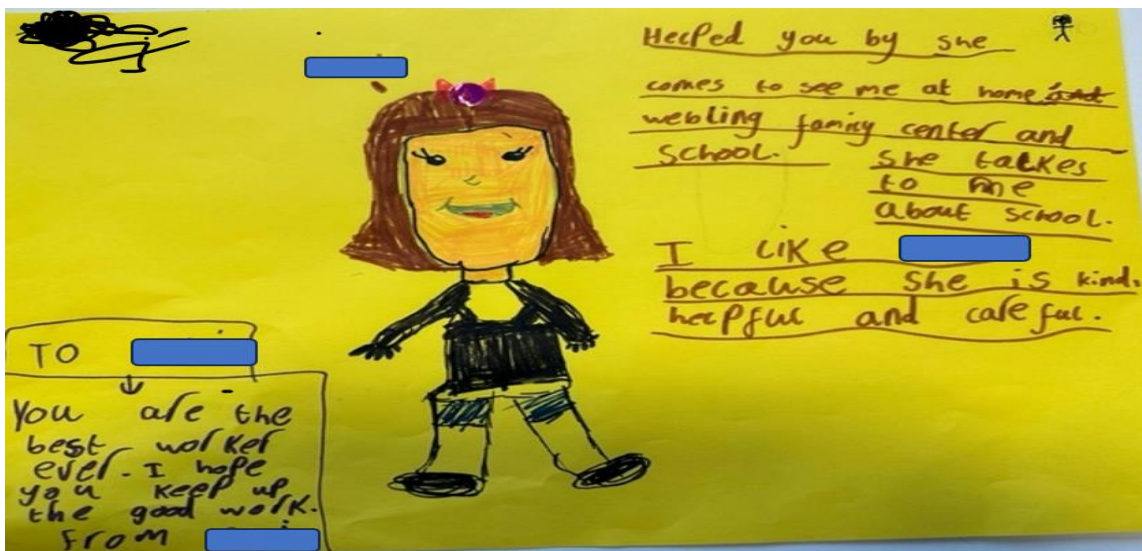
I have been allocated about 10 different social workers and passed around like a parcel.

<The young person> shared with me that she feels that the support being implemented is the right support for her and her family so

I meet with my PA every two months and we speak all the time. If I contact him over a particular issue then he would make arrangements to see me more frequently at times. I am happy with how my plan is progressing.

CIN meetings - I attend them and I have chaired my own meetings. It is important because the meetings are about me.

I will ring <PA> and have a rant and he will listen. I can talk to him and if I ask him to do something he will do it like chasing up Social Workers. I don't attend meetings but the next one will include plans to get back into work so I might get more involved then.



The drawing above was created by a 7-year-old girl during a planned visit by the auditor to gain her views. This shows that she values the Social Worker because she is "kind, helpful and caring."

We are using audit activity as another means of gaining feedback from children and families and ensuring that there is appropriate follow up when issues are raised.

Auditors also spoke to **34** parents and carers during the audit period to gain their views on their experience with Children's Social Care and also triangulate with audit findings. It is significant that we have specific feedback from a father who feels that he was not considered as this was a recurring theme; not isolated to him. Parent's/carers told us:

I feel left out the loop, it is very rare I find out what goes on with the meetings, I have only been invited to 1 meeting. They <the SW> are really good with my kids but they have done nothing for me. They can't be "XXXXX". It's like I don't matter.

(feedback from a dad)

<Parent> doesn't feel happy in general with social care as there have been so many different Social Workers. She doesn't feel she has been able to build relationships so she can rely on them to provide her with support. <Parent> has not met the new social worker properly yet as she was unwell on the last visit.

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I have been fully involved in the assessments that have taken place and have been prepared for meetings and had reports in advance. This has built my trust and made the assessments more open. My neurodiversity is acknowledged and adjustments put in place to support.

The support we have had has been so positive. The SW is amazing, a credit to Sefton and should be cloned. It would be a mistake to ever let her go as she has had such a positive impact on our family.

I agree with assessment as we have regular meetings. I am kept up to date. I had been given a copy of the assessment and felt it was very detailed. I feel really supported and so does <the young person>, they put us at the centre of everything.

<The carer> described purposeful visits to the home by the SW and also understood the reasons visits were taking place and how they connected to the plan.

I don't blame CSC for the drawn out court hearings. But it has been a long time. We have felt supported by the SW and IRO and are celebrating 2 years of being together as a family. When we have our final hearing on X we hope that this is the celebration of the adoption being granted.

The plan worked great for me, made me realise what I had to do and this makes me happy. I wasn't ready to leave <previous partner>, it changed my life completing the Mirror Project. I am very happy it happened. If I didn't have the plan I don't know what would have happened.

Thematic dip sample audits completed:

- Child participation and planning for cared for review meetings - 20 children/young people sampled.
- Children on repeat Child Protection Plans - 5 families sampled.
- S47s decision making- 17 families sampled.
- Early Years PEPs - 6 children sampled.
- Assessments which identify specific needs and disabilities - 12 families sampled.
- Quality of assessments in CWCN and Cared for Children- 9 families sampled.

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All thematic dip samples have individual actions set by the auditors for follow up and feed into practice improvement activity.

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Data as at end of April 2024

The top ten indicators are measures being monitored in the DfE Commissioner's report and where possible, a rolling 12 month and 6 month figure is used to show recent progress.

Indicators 8-23 compares the latest 6 month data from April 2024 to 6 month data 12 months ago, as taken from the ChAT report.

The scorecard also shows the direction of travel and comparisons made to published statistics (2022-23)

Key indicator. Targets have been set for all key indicators.														Latest published statistics (2022-23)				
No	Indicator	LA rolling 12m (May23 - Apr24)	LA rolling 6m (Nov23 - Apr24)	Direction of travel (RAG rated where low/high is stated)	Target	Low/High is good	RIG Q3 Sefton	RIG Q3 NW	LA	SN	NW	Eng	Compared to mid-50% LA	Analysis				
1	Referrals received (annual rate per 10,000 of children)*	646.0	711.0	↑	580	-	636.1	511	823	630	530	545	Higher	After a peak of 658 referrals per 10k children in February, the 12 month rolling rate has slightly fallen to 646. The 6 month rolling rate is higher at 711, due to a busier than average period during January and February. 12 month rate is above target and stat neighbour group.				
2	Referrals to social care that were within 12 months of a previous referral (%)*	23.5%	21.7%	↓	21%	Low	20.8%	21.4%	27	24	22	22	Higher	Re-referral rate in rolling 12 months has gradually fallen since September 2023 where it was 27%, compared to 23.5% as at end of April. Compared to 21.7% of re-referrals in the last six months, this highlights the progress being made and the rate is slowly moving to the target of 21%. Progress has been made, the current 12 month rate of 23.5% is on par with stat neighbour group, but slightly above NW and England.				
3	Assessments completed (annual rate per 10,000 of children)*	809.2	805	↓	622	-	813.1	583.3	919	667	597	557	Higher	The rate of assessments was on a downward trajectory since June 2023 (898.4), but this month has seen a slight upturn. The 6 month figure (805) shows that progress is being made, however the rate is far from the revised target of 622. Despite the continued fall in rate, Sefton still has a higher rate compared to the benchmarking group.				
4	Assessments completed within 45 working days (%)*	77.6%	87.0%	↑	89%	High	88.8%	83.6%	74	84	79	82	Lower	The rolling 12 month rate of assessments completed within 45 days has been on the increase month on month since September 2023, where the completion rate in time was at 65.2% April figure sits at 74.4%. 6 month rolling figure of 87% shows the improvement made in this area, as it edges towards meeting the target of 89%. 12 month rate is currently below benchmarking groups, however if the 6 month rate is sustained, then all benchmarking groups will be surpassed.				
5	Children subject to section 47 enquiries (annual rate per 10,000 of children)*	257.9	253	↓	207	-	280.3	198.8	378	222	210	192	Higher	Direction of travel for the 12 month rolling rate of s47 enquiries has been on a downward trend since April 2023 - 382 per 10k to 258 per 10k at the end of April. 6 month rolling rate is lower at 253. Progress is being made to the revised target of 207 (previously 250) and would still place Sefton in the higher range when compared to benchmarking neighbours.				
6	Percentage of agency social workers (%) in workforce**	30% (Jan24)	27% (Mar24)	↓	20%	Low	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Target is to reduce the percentage of agency staff from 50% to 20% and The latest figure from March 2024 of 27% shows very good progress has been made.				
7	Percentage of CIN Visits completed within timescales	69.0%	72.7%	↑	90%	High	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Monthly performance data shows that progress has been made in terms of CIN visit timeliness, where summer 2024 saw an average completion rate of 62%, compared to the 6 month rate of 72.7%.				
8	Percentage of Assessments completed within 45 working days by Corporate Parenting	63.0%	65.2%	↑	85%	High	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Although Corporate Parenting only complete an average of 27 assessments per month, completion rates in timescale has been previously poor. However, assessments completed within 45 days has seen rates increase from 59% in the summer to an average of 88% in the last three months.				
9	Percentage of CP Visits completed within timescales	83.5%	89.1%	↑	90%	High	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Progress has been made with CP visits has shown by 6 month rolling average of 89%, compared to 83.5 for the rolling 12 months. On track to meet target.				
10	Percentage of Cfc Visits completed within timescales	83.3%	81.2%	↓	90%	High	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Due to an unusually poorer completion rate in January 2024, where rates dipped under 80% in time, 6 month rolling rate has been affected by this.				

No	Indicator	LA Apr23 ChAT	LA Apr24 ChAT	Direction of travel	Target	Low/High is good	RIG Q3 Sefton	RIG Q3 NW	Latest published statistics (2022-23)				Compared to mid-50% LA	Analysis
									LA	SN	NW	Eng		
11	Children subject of an initial child protection conference (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	74	69	↓	-	-	83	65.7	99	72	69	63	Higher	The rate of children per 10,000 who were subject of an ICPC has fallen in the last 6 month as the rate falls from 74 to 69. This is on par with North West and under stat neighbours.
12	Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 working days of the start of the section 47 enquiry (%)	91%	65%	↓	-	High	84%	79.7%	91	80	80	78	Higher	ICPC timeliness rate has fallen since 12 months ago and monthly analysis shows a slight dip in performance in the last couple of months.
13	Children in need (snapshot rate per 10,000 children) **	518	465	↓	-	-	459	369.1	517	390	387	343	Higher	The rate of children in need has fallen compared to 12 months ago. Current rate is on par with 2022-23 data and higher than benchmarking group.
14	Children who are the subject of a child protection plan (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	62	47	↓	-	-	54	50.8	63	50	49	43	Higher	Rate of CP children have continued to fall since May 2023, where the rate was 67. Current rate is at 47. The number of CP children in Sefton is under 300 for the fifth consecutive month. Prior to December 2023, CP numbers have been above 300 since December 2021. The current rate is slightly below statistical neighbours and North West.
15	Children who became the subject of a CP plan for a second or subsequent time (%)	18%	18%	↔	-	Low	20.7%	21.7%	18	23	24	24	Lower	The rate of repeat CP is the same compared to same period last year. Below benchmarking neighbours.
16	Children who ceased to be on a CP plan whose plan lasted 2 years or more	4	3	↓	-	Low	-	-	4	4	5	4	In range	The percentage of children who ceased to be on a CP plan for 2 years or more has always been low and is on par with benchmarking groups.
17	Children who are looked after (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	115	108	↓	-	-	110	94	114	93	97	71	Higher	The number of Cared for Children has remained under 600 for the third consecutive month (586) and is the lowest number since March 2020 (566). The rate per 10k is still higher than statistical neighbours and national. Recent North West analysis shows Sefton to be 7th highest in the group.
18	Children looked after who had a missing incident in the period (%)	11	11	↔	-	-	-	-	10	12	12	11	In range	Rate remains static over 12 month period and inline with statistical neighbours and national.
19	Children looked after who were away without authorisation in the period (%)	1%	1%	↔	-	-	-	-	1	3	2	2	Lower	Rate remains static over 12 month period and low compared with statistical neighbours and national.
20	Children looked after who had their teeth checked by a dentist in the last 12 months (%)	79%	68%	↓	-	High	-	-	87	74	77	76	Higher	Percentage rate has fallen since this time last year and is currently below benchmarking groups. However, this rate usually increases throughout the year and is expected to be inline with benchmarking group by the end of the reporting year.
21	Children looked after who had their annual health assessment (%)	93%	96%	↑	-	High	-	-	98	90	92	89	Higher	Percentage rate has increased since this time last year. Above benchmarking groups.
22	Children who ceased to be looked after in the period who were adopted (%)	3%	8%	↑	-	-	-	-	<1%	10	9	9	In range	Adoption rate remains stable, but is very low compared to benchmarking groups.
23	Children who ceased to be looked after in the period due to a Special Guardianship Order (%)	18%	24%	↑	-	-	-	-	21	-	15	12	Higher	Percentage rate has increased since the same period last year. Above last year's figure and above benchmarking group.

No	Indicator	LA Apr23 ChAT	LA Apr24 ChAT	Direction of travel	Target	Low/High is good	RIG Q3 Sefton	RIG Q3 NW	Latest published statistics (2022-23)				Compared to mid-50% LA	Analysis
									LA	SN	NW	Eng		
24	Children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until their 18th birthday (%)	83%	85%	↑	-	High	-	-	100	91	81	79	Higher	Percentage rate has increased slightly since the same period last year and is currently above NW and England, but below stat neighbours.
25	Care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation (%) - Latest snapshot **	80%	90%	↑	-	High	-	-	91	88	90	88	In range	The rate of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation has increased compared to same period last year. In the same range with benchmarking groups.
26	Care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment, or training (%) - Latest snapshot **	43%	45%	↑	-	High	-	-	47	53	54	56	Lower	Young people in employment, education or training (EET) has increased slightly when comparing to the same period 12 months ago. This rate is below benchmarking groups.

* rolling 12 months data. All others figures are taken from the ChAT 12 months ago

** snapshot at end of April 2024

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 4 June 2024
Subject:	Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Children's Services (Quality Assurance and Safeguarding)	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

Detailed within the Sefton SCP Annual Report 2022-23 is the work undertaken by the Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership, whose purpose is to safeguard children and work together with a collective aim to better improve the outcomes for our children and young people.

Recommendation(s):

(1) Members note the report.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

As outlined above.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs - Sefton Council's financial contribution to Sefton SCP is £72,800

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(B) Capital Costs – None identified

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): N/A	
Legal Implications: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) Children and Social Work Act 2017	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications	
Impact on Children and Young People: No	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	Yes
Have a neutral impact	No
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The safeguarding children's partnership arrangements are intended to enhance the collective contribution to continue to safeguard children in Sefton.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: the intention of the arrangements for safeguarding children is to enhance children's resilience and support families to protect children and their families. The legislation outlines how the 3 statutory partners: the Local Authority, Integrated Care Board and Police should work together to protect children.
Commission, broker and provide core services: n/a
Place – leadership and influencer: n/a
Drivers of change and reform: n/a
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: n/a
Greater income for social investment: n/a
Cleaner Greener: n/a

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

- (B) Designated partners of the local authority are part of the Sefton SCP and have sight of the annual report 2022-23.

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7617/24.....) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5717/24.....) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee.

Contact Officer:	Joe Banham
Telephone Number:	07584667600
Email Address:	Joe.banham@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Sefton SCP Annual Report 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

Background Papers: See above

1. Introduction/Background

Reporting requirements for our safeguarding partnership arrangements are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) on pages 82-83 as follows:

“In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners must publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. The report must set out what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

In addition, the report should also include:

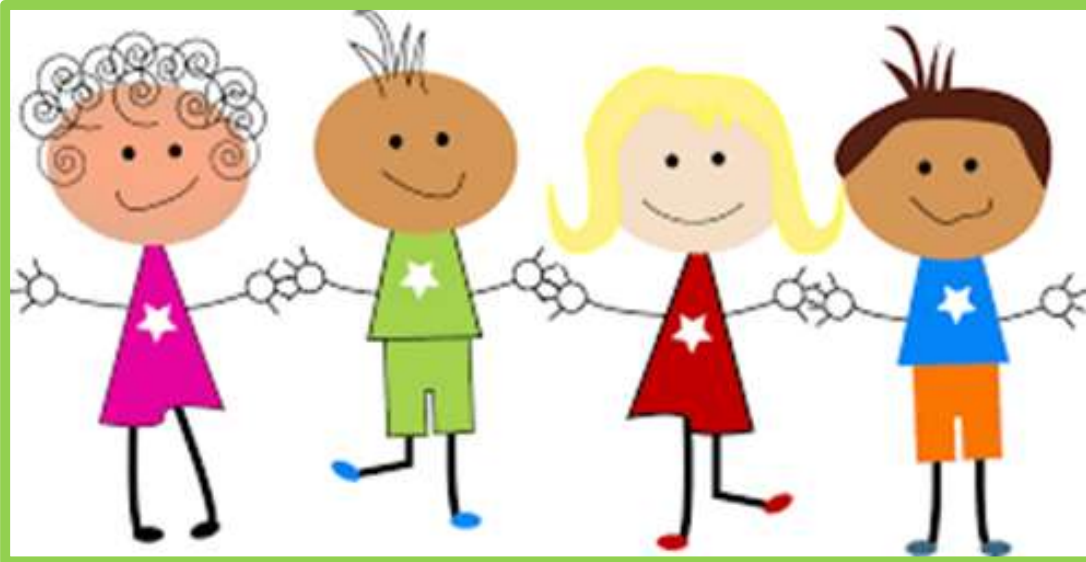
- Evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked after children and care leavers.
- An analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities

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- A record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements.
- Ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.



Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



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Introduction by 3 Key Safeguarding Leads

This is the first annual report written under our leadership as the new delegated strategic leaders for the children’s safeguarding partnership. Similar to the previous annual report, the SSCP has experienced a significant amount of change and challenges during the year and consequently, we are not where we want to be but are working very hard to get there with some progress made to address the 3 priorities set out by the partnership on Neglect, contextual safeguarding and the integrated front door arrangements. All of the priorities were based on learning from cases, analysis of child protection data including referrals and feedback from the workforce, partners and Ofsted.

We are working collaboratively with representatives from across the wider partnership who are committed to embedding the changes required to improve the outcomes for our children and families across the local area.

On 1st July 2022, Sefton and Southport and Formby Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG’s) has formed under the new arrangements in health as Cheshire and Merseyside NHS Integrated Care System. This has enabled the partnership to stock take previous revisions to health membership and under the new arrangements health provider leadership has been re-instated onto the safeguarding partnership in order to strengthen membership onto the safeguarding forum and sub groups. This has strengthened a system approach of collaboration.

Sefton Local Authority Children’s Services underwent an ILAC Ofsted Inspection that rated the service as inadequate. As a safeguarding partnership we recognise that this rating does not sit solely with Childrens Social Care but reflects on the partnership as a whole in its collective responsibility to support children and families, facilitate change, recognise blockages and support good practice. On this note, we are wholly committed to working collectively together to bring about improvements, and at pace, for the benefit of our children, their families, as well as professionals who work tirelessly to make a difference to the families’ lived experiences in Sefton.

Signed by Sefton 3 Key Leads (Safeguarding Children)

Risthardh Hare, Director of Children’s Services (Sefton Council)	
Kerrie France, Associate Director (NHS Cheshire & Merseyside ICB)	
Dawn McNally, Superintendent (Merseyside Police)	

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Sefton SCP Partnership Arrangements

Sefton 3 Key Safeguarding Partners

The following representatives form tripartite leadership of Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP).

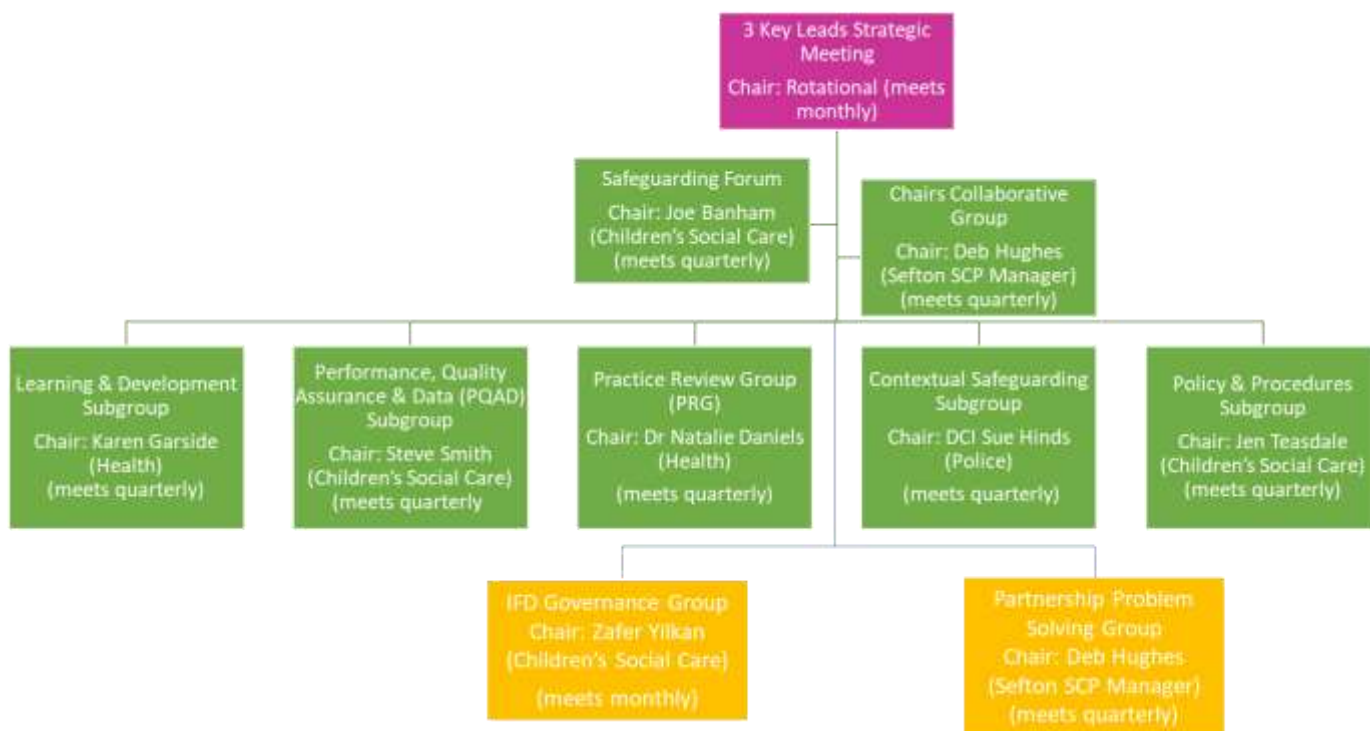
- Sefton Council
- NHS Cheshire Merseyside Integrated Care Board
- Merseyside Police



The Sefton SCP Safeguarding Forum includes representatives from the following organisations and sectors:

- Sefton Council
- NHS Cheshire & Merseyside ICB
- Merseyside Police
- Education – Schools & Colleges
- Sefton Public Health
- Alder Hey NHS Hospital
- Aintree NHS Hospital
- Liverpool University Foundation Trusts
- Sefton Council for Voluntary Services (CVS)
- Probation Service
- Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
- Change Grow Live
- Mersey Care NHS Trust

Current Sefton SCP Structure



SSCP Governance Review

During the reporting period, the statutory partners have embraced an opportunity for a ‘critical friend’ review of the effectiveness of the changes made to the safeguarding partnership arrangements in September 2022. This review was undertaken by the Independent Scrutineer at the stage where the revised arrangements had been in place for approximately 12 months and there were 3 new delegated statutory partner representative leads for SSCP who could then move forward by using the findings to inform the leadership approach they will take to harness the collective desire to deliver improvement. The recommendations were grouped under four headings as follows:

Leadership and Culture	Progress made
Deliver a programme of activities over a sustained period to develop the culture of partnership working at an operational and strategic level. Areas to address include common purpose, individual responsibilities, behaviours, accountabilities and celebrating successes.	The 3 Key Leads have worked together to strengthen their communication and commitment to this area of work and have started to embed the values of the partnership and encouraged engagement by strengthening the membership representations. They have led events for partnership members to develop a positive culture of partnership working. Their visibility has also increased at partnership meetings where they wouldn't ordinarily be expected to attend. Anecdotally, members are finding this to be a supportive and positive approach.
The new SLT members to collectively determine the role and functions of SLT and how they will deliver their leadership responsibilities.	The 3 Key Leads now have a stronger shared accountability and have collectively agreed how they will deliver their collective responsibilities. Agreement for funding has been reached for the coming year (see appendix 1).
Hold a cross partnership event to review safeguarding priorities and clarify responsibilities of respective partnerships including performance management arrangements. This event should be informed by Children's Services Improvement Plan and local and national CSPR learning, and consideration should be given as to whether core safeguarding and right help at right time should be local safeguarding priorities.	This event was held by the 3 Key Leads and from this, under consideration of the Childrens Service Improvement Plan and LCSPR learning, the revised priorities for the partnership were created which have included a priority on core safeguarding.

Independent Scrutiny	Progress made
Review the extent to which the current model of independent scrutiny enables the scrutineer role to support and challenge the leadership provided by the statutory safeguarding partners.	This has been completed with clearer parameters of scrutiny approaches agreed. This includes the contribution of the scrutineer at the 3 Key Lead meeting.

Governance	Progress made
Implement arrangements for SLT to monitor the delivery of SSCP strategic plan and statutory functions; this should include creation of a SSCP risk register. Consideration to be given to adopting a system whereby individual SLT members sponsor a priority/area of business and introducing arrangements for SSCP Manager to report/escalate to a member of SLT.	This is currently under development.
Secure the permanent appointment of subgroup chairs with sufficient authority and influence to drive work programmes and hold individuals and the system to account.	This has been achieved, subgroup chairs for all of the SSCP structure now in place. The 3 Key Leads have improved the structure of the SSCP to better target our local areas of focus and reintroduced key sub groups that were no longer operating.
Review and refine the membership of the Safeguarding Forum to promote stronger two-way engagement between statutory safeguarding partners and relevant partners.	Revisions have been made to the Forum membership and there is now a wider range of agency representation. The 3 Key Leads have also scheduled in their representation at Forum meetings to provide additional steer and support.

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<p>(Review SSCP priorities) and create an outcome focused strategic plan supported by a SMART delivery plan.</p>	<p>Priorities have been refreshed, approach in place for completion of the Strategic Plan but this remains outstanding.</p>
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<p>Accountability</p>	<p>Progress made</p>
<p>Present a copy of this report to Council Chief Executive, Chief Constable, and Chief Nurse, ICB and confirm arrangements as to how they will be appraised of the actions taken in response to the findings/recommendations and their impact.</p>	<p>Governance arrangements are in place within the 3 Key Lead accountability structures for this to be completed. They each have a clear line of accountability to their executive leads and ensure that key safeguarding messages are shared</p>
<p>Provide an overview of the actions taken in response to the findings of this exercise, along with an evaluation of their impact, in the SSCP Annual Report 22-23</p>	<p>Completed.</p>

SSCP Priority Work Progress

1. Neglect

Sefton SSCP has a clear neglect strategy (2020-25) supported by partners regarding Early Help and Intervention. Neglect is an issue that requires a detailed strategic approach to assist partners to be clear on what neglect is. To support practitioners, there was agreement that there would be a launch of the Graded Care profile 2 (GCP2). This is an assessment tool that helps practitioners take a strengths-based approach to measuring the quality of care a child is receiving and supports them to identify neglect. Due to resource limitations, there was no capacity to effectively embed this across the partnership and an executive decision was made to cease in this approach. However, the SSCP's does have a comprehensive neglect screening tool **Neglect Screening Tool**.

This screening tool is intended for use by frontline practitioners within ALL partner agencies to quickly identify areas of concern that may indicate a child or adolescent is being neglected. This is designed to be applicable to all age groups. The tool is not a full assessment of risk and should be used by practitioners alongside the levels of need document. During this reporting period the SSCP has had the screening tool reviewed by a leading expert in neglect with positive feedback.

It is the intention of the SSCP that any contact made to the integrated front door for reasons of neglect should have the accompanying tool completed and attached. There is ongoing work to improve technological systems that can easily pull out this data which will allow the partnership to gain assurance that the process is embedded and having a positive outcome for children. In addition, the SSCP will complete a comprehensive audit on this area of work and respond to the findings.

There has been a concentrated effort on the theme of neglect through the learning and development subgroup. This group has commissioned specialist training through a subject expert and was well attended by practitioners from across the partnership. In addition, there has been the creation of a SWAY briefing to develop awareness raising in practice as well as the development of resources to upskill practitioners. Full resource list is contained on the SSCP website (www.seftonscp.org.uk). The resources have been positively received by the workforce and were created to improve practitioners' knowledge and skills. For the coming year the SSCP will be providing further development opportunities for practitioners to recognise the differences between poverty awareness versus neglect.

For this reporting period there were 455 Child Protection Plans started. Of this 37.6% were for neglect. For the previous reporting year (2021/22) there were 380 Child Protection Plans started of which 41.6% were for neglect.

2. Contextual Safeguarding

The contextual safeguarding subgroup carried out a benchmarking exercise to better understand the gaps in service provision for children and young people. This involved presentations from all departments within the child safeguarding process. This valuable exercise brought to light that:

- 1) The scale of the problem was not fully understood.
- 2) The service provision is not comprehensive.
- 3) The understanding of the subject area by frontline staff needs to be developed.

This exercise then triggered a list of priority work which includes:

- An agreed Terms of Reference for the subgroups scope and purpose.
- A 'True for Us' comparison exercise benchmarked against a neighbouring authorities Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) report.
- Introduction of a CE Dataset although still to be introduced.
- Audit of ETAC and how it sits alongside the Pan Merseyside MACE

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- Supporting the transition arrangements that supports children from the Youth Justice Service (YJS) to the National Probation Service (NPS) post 18 years of age.
- Review offender profile to ensure there is a uniformed understanding of how this is interpreted.
- Undertake a mapping exercise to better understand how education providers address exploitation.
- Completion of a service provision analysis to determine where the gaps are and seek support to address them.
- Increased training and development offer for frontline practitioners.

This work is in progress and sub group members have already completed some of the priority tasks identified. This work will carry forward into 2023 under the 'Harm Outside the Home' agreed priority.

During the reporting period Sefton Local Authority Children's Services along with key partner agencies reviewed its processes in relation to children and young people who are missing from home, education and care and are at risk of exploitation. It became apparent that the system was not robust enough to adequately address missing and exploitation. Following the review, new ways of working were implemented to strengthen both the practice and response to missing. As a result, the local authority (with the support of partner agencies) is introducing a new service called My S.P.A.C.E. This will be a multi-agency dedicated service to respond and deliver timely services for children and young people aged 10-18 who have a Social Worker who go missing and/or are exploited or at risk of exploitation. These changes will include the following:

- A dedicated team of practitioners who undertake Return Home Interviews
- Team of intervention workers carrying out intensive work with the children and young people who go missing.
- Daily morning meetings with partners to share intelligence on the children who go missing overnight.
- Partnership Exploitation Screening Tool will be completed by the professionals who are concerned that the child/young person is at risk of exploitation.
- Exploitation Team Around Child (ETAC) meetings are taking place within 72 hours of the child/young person being referred and safety plan formulated for the child/young person.
- ETAC plan is reviewed every 4-6 weeks to monitor progress and review the safety plan.
- Every child has a bespoke safety plan formulated which includes the child and their parents/carers.
- Review Missing procedures, including the recording of episodes and those children are offered a Return Home Interview (RHI).
- Improve the consistency and quality of RHI's and how they are used to inform planning.
- Review MACE processes for children at risk of exploitation including developing a performance data set to ensure there is monitoring and oversight at all levels.
- Quality of MACE risk assessments to be reviewed to include analysis, safety planning and disruption.

During the reporting period the SSCP has not received the necessary data in relation to this area of safeguarding which has resulted in the SSCP not being in a position to understand the scale and scope of the problem. This in itself is an area of risk.

Whilst My S.P.A.C.E. has been in development this has taken over priority of Sefton's agreed contribution to the PAN Merseyside MACE Protocol. Sefton is signed up to the [PAN Merseyside Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Protocol](#) (last reviewed in January 2023).

This Protocol provides a set of multi-agency principles for tackling Child Exploitation across Merseyside. Each borough is required to report quarterly into Pan Merseyside Strategic MACE:

- 1) Number of CE assessment proceeded to MACE
- 2) How many children in MACE (may be or being exploited)?
- 3) How many children were closed off MACE (assessed as low)
- 4) How many children were closed as agencies have been unable to engage
- 5) How many re-referrals back into MACE within six months?
- 6) No. of children assessed as high risk for over six months and findings

7) No. of escalations have been made by MACE chairs and outcome

8) No. of NRM submitted and where they completed as part of a Multi-Agency forum?

It will be expected that Sefton now redirect efforts to actively, and consistently, support the agreed protocol alongside any new local service initiatives.

3. Remodelling of Sefton's 'Front Door' arrangements

The Integrated Front door (IFD)

During the reporting period there has been the creation of an Integrated Front Door system to receive and make decisions on all of the contact coming into both early help and children social care. This has brought about the alignment of Early Help Service practitioners into Children's Social Care developed to support the right response for children is given by the appropriate professional at the right time. Changes have included the introduction of an:

Early Help Hub:

This is now a specific team within the IFD which deals solely with the referrals from Early Help. This consists of a team manager, assistant team manager, senior early help worker and 4 early help researchers. This allows for a consistent oversight of Early Help contacts received a focussed response.

This has been trailed for a period and data is pending regarding this.

and a:

Threshold Clinic

The Threshold Clinic is seeking to provide an enhanced Quality Assurance dimension to social work practice by creating a consistent and transparent approach to the application of Sefton's Level of Need.

The Threshold Clinic will form part of the auditing framework which sets out to ensure that improving outcomes for children is being achieved and reflection on the impact of our practice on the families we work with is understood. This consists of a weekly meeting with a service manager, team manager from IFD and Team Manager from the Assessment service. Threshold Clinic promotes, reflection, conversations and critical challenge on recent decisions made.

The Threshold Clinic will therefore help to answer the following questions: -

- Are we applying threshold in all aspects of our work?
- What difference is this making?
- What could we do differently?

This has been trailed for a period and data is pending regarding this.

Through multi-agency consultation, the Level of Need guidance was refreshed and strengthened to support this and launched in January 2023. This has included a robust training offer from the SSCP.

At present work is still underway to introduce a mature and clear dataset that will support the partnership to understand and address activity taking place at the front door which includes:

- Thorough analysis of conversion rates and evidence of a reduction in conversion rate from contact to referrals.
- Thorough analysis of 'alteration' rates to better understand what cases are referred in at, (by Level of Need category) to what they are concluded to be and where/if there is a difference.
- Understanding the provision of advice and information being given to allow a targeted response of support.

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- Requests for information and missing children and how these are being managed.
- Timeliness of decision making in line with 'Working Together'.
- Evidence of reduction or increase in re-referrals and the reasons why.
- Evidence of reduction or increase in re-contacts and the reasons why.
- Fewer contacts are being 'no further actioned'(NFA'd)

The Integrated Front Door Governance group remains under development but is working at pace to strengthen its governance arrangements including both an agreed multi-agency dataset and a refreshed information sharing agreement. The SSCP is dependent on this group to provide information, data analysis, challenges, risks and evidence of positive outcomes for children and families to understand and act upon any safeguarding issues that need addressing.

Moving forward the priorities of the SSCP will be changed from:

1. Neglect
2. Integrated Front Door
3. Contextual Safeguarding

to:

1. Leadership and culture
2. Core safeguarding
3. Harm outside the home.

The new priorities provide a stronger framework for the partnership to focus on a wider range of safeguarding risks and influences beyond (but including) neglect and the integrated front door, such as mental health, domestic abuse, exploitation in all its forms along with neglect that are all significant factors impacting on young children's lives. The SSCP strategic plan will be framed accordingly to ensure that we capture the ongoing work and any new commissioned/tasked work covering all key areas along with ensuring that we have effective review structures in place to identify and capture learning for the partnership.

Learning from Practice Reviews

During the reporting year Sefton published one Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. This review heard of the death of a 12-week-old baby where co-sleeping and domestic abuse were key features.

Multi-agency training and staff development activities based on learning from this, and previous local reviews, as well as national reviews, has taken place throughout the year. This has included:

- SERIOUS Training (Self Harm & Suicide Prevention)
- Children with Mental Health Training (including strategies to support children and young people with mental health difficulties) delivered by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Bereavement Training
- Briefings on 'Understanding the role of the Rainbow Centre and Sexual Abuse Referral Centre (SARC)' by Alder Hey Hospital
- Briefings on 'Sexual Health Service in Sefton' to provide knowledge to support to all professionals.
- Promotion of key messages across the partnership in relation to 'consent' and use of Gillick Competency and Fraser Guidelines
- Identifying alcohol risks and supported referrals
- Domestic abuse training
- Safe sleep promotional work
- Pre-birth Protocol re-circulation
- Revised Level of Need Guidance to refresh and include further descriptors in relation to contextual safeguarding.
- Large multi-agency workforce event (Power of the Partnership) to promote the benefits for children and families to improve their outcomes when professionals work well together. This event was also used to reinforce the importance of engaging fathers in family work.
- The development and delivery of digital SWAY briefings in relation to the following themes:
 - Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)
 - Peer on Peer Abuse
 - SEXTING
 - Bullying

Key themes from local & national learning reviews	Partnership response
1 Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSCP commissioned independent subject expert to deliver neglect training and review the quality of the SSCP Neglect Screening Tool. • Designed new virtual briefing for quality completion of the neglect screening tool. • Increased neglect focused activity within multi-agency Working Together to Safeguard Children training. • Level of Need Guidance refresh strengthening descriptors to reflect escalating concerns of neglect. • Developed a new SWAY Briefing on neglect.
2 Contextual/Risks outside the home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned independent subject expert to deliver bespoke workshops on managing contextual risks to a group of schools. • Commissioned independent subject expert to deliver training on harmful sexual behaviour and child on child abuse across the partnership. • Promoted materials and resources on Contextual Safeguarding across the partnership. • Introduced new SWAY Briefings on contextual safeguarding themes.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered virtual briefings to introduce new team MYSPACE (CE and Missing Team) • Briefings delivered by Merseyside Police on: Cyber Crime and Protecting Children from Exploitation • Increased contextual safeguarding activities within Working Together to Safeguard Children training.
<p>3 Pre-Birth Vulnerabilities of Unborn/Babies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted a 7-minute briefing containing learning from a local review linked to safe sleep messages. • Promoted the ICON campaign (coping with a crying baby) • Safe sleep pathway promoted in Sefton. • Developed a SWAY briefing on ‘pre-birth’ protocol. • Pan Mersey policies refreshed and incorporated unborn addendum within refreshed Level of Need Guidance. • Active support of Merseyside & IOM Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) campaigns
<p>4 Hidden Male</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale SSCP Partnership Event held in January 2023 highlighting working with whole families, identifying hidden males and including known males in family work. • Delivered virtual briefings on the learning from the national review into the deaths of Arthur & Star. • Multi layered approach within all SSCP training events focusing on the hidden male theme. • Delivered specialised training on Domestic Abuse – prevalence and impact.

Child Death Overview Panel Focus

There remains clear professional synergy with the SSCP and the Pan Mersey and Isle of Mann Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). There is a clear referral mechanism for CDOP to request the review of any child death case where partnership learning is evident in the case for further exploration. During the period Sefton SSCP did not receive any referrals from CDOP under these circumstances.

However, CDOP developed a Safer Sleep Conversation tool in response to the reoccurring issues with safe sleep environments as a modifiable factor and also linked to Sefton’s Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review ‘Delilah’. Alongside this, CDOP supported the roll out of training for frontline professionals by the Lullaby Trust which also addresses the issues around safer sleep environments.



SSCP Quality Assurance and Audit Activity

The Performance, Quality Assurance and Data sub was not operating as it should have been due to the absence of an identified Chair and the deletion of the SSCP QA Officer post. This has had a significant impact on the partnership's ability to:

- get an informed intelligence grip on the system through a bespoke data set.
- provide challenge where it was required to support improvements.
- undertake scheduled and reactive audits where required.

These will be addressed and resolved as a priority by the Performance, Quality Assurance and Data sub group.

Through the identification of a Chair, this group has only been re-established since February 2023 and therefore, up to that point, little has been achieved. However, the partnership did commission an independent auditor to undertake the Section 11 which was completed in November 2022 and the subgroup will now introduce a process by which the information shared from partner agencies can be further assured through a challenge panel approach.

Section 175 was incomplete during this year as the quality of the data became unreliable as we switched from one online provider to another. The design of the improved new audit tool will include new and additional information in response to all legislative changes and will go live in November 2023. Our education providers continue to work tirelessly to have robust safeguarding policies and practices in place. It is to be noted that within the year there have been 29 schools inspected by Ofsted, all of which have been judged to have effective safeguarding arrangements in place.

Education colleagues have continued to support the work of the SSCP and are proactive representatives within the partnership structure. Designated Safeguarding Lead training has been maintained throughout the year with a consistent high rate of attendance. There is a continued focus across schools to improve effective joint working with wider partnership agencies.

'Tell us your truth survey' (2023)

Sefton SCP conducted a multi-agency staff survey asking 2 questions.

- 1) What are your top 3 safeguarding concerns for young people
- 2) What are your top 3 multi-agency partnership working concerns/barriers.

Top concerns were identified as:

- Mental Health Difficulties in YP (45%)
- Neglect (34%)
- Child Exploitation (33%)

Barriers were identified as:

- Quality of information sharing (53%)
- Case communication (40%)
- Not being notified of a change of worker (36%)

In response, the SSCP will use the refreshed SSCP Strategic Plan to inform future Performance and quality assurance activity. To support, the partnership delivered additional training for multi-agency professionals in all 3 identified areas of safeguarding concerns. In regard to the barriers identified within multi-agency collaboration we will further promote research and evidence to support improved professional practice and curiosity.

It is recognised that there remains a gap in the SSCP actively seeking the contributions of children and families in the work undertaken which includes audit activity. This will be addressed in the coming year with clear expectations communicated of increasing their contributions to hear their voices, along with gathering evidence that service responses have altered where appropriate to meet the needs of children and families.

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Sefton SCP Workforce Development (Engagement and Attendance at Training)

Sefton SCP Learning and Development offer has provided the multi-agency children's workforce with opportunities to influence and impact upon their safeguarding children practice and responsibilities.

Collaboration for SSCP Learning and Development offer is informed by SSCP Business Priorities, national learning and local need and concentrates on areas identified from previous reporting year e.g., April 2022-March 2023. This has included:

- Design and deliver an enhanced training programme specific to the partnership safeguarding priorities.
- Launch the revised Level of Need Guidance across the partnership.
- Provide training offers in response to audit activity across the system.
- Deliver briefings for the partnership on national reviews and safeguarding research.
- Be responsive to training needs that are highlighted in Ofsted Inspections.

All the areas of work identified from the previous year's annual report have been achieved. The SSCP have also strengthened the reporting arrangements through the SSCP structure to ensure there is oversight at all levels on training applications and attendance across the multi-agency partnership. Moving forward, attendance and engagement will be a standing item at all Learning and Development subgroups. This will be included in the subgroup Chairs report to be presented to the Safeguarding Forum which in turn will be reported up to the 3 Key Leads for their oversight.








During the period April 2022-March 2023 **48** courses offered (virtual and face to face model) with **1395** professionals attending

Forward planning for SCP Partnership for 2023/24 is as follows:

- Respond and offer training programme reflecting SSCP Priorities and embed and sustain current offer to ensure all agencies access the learning and development offer .
- SSCP Learning and Development Subgroup to develop a work plan that falls from the SSCP Strategic Plan.
- Contextual Safeguarding -Sustain and embed opportunities for childrens workforce to understand Harmful Sexual Behaviours.
- Identify tools to support and identify Harmful Sexual Behaviours practice e.g Brook Traffic Light Tool and develop a model to cascade across Partership.
- Further embed SERIOUS Self Harm and Suicide training.
- Further training on Levels of Need. Out of the two briefings undertaken only 79 professionals attended.
- Develop Sexual Health Briefing in Partnership with Sefton Sexual Health Service
- Deliver 30 minute briefing on Neglect Screening Tool
- Training to be delivered
- Design SWAY Briefings on Harmful Practices
- Devise Briefings for Neglect Screening Tool and Revised level of Need
- Respond to learning from National Reviews
- Hold sessions on the revised Working Together Guidance when updated.
- Support Children Social care Improvement Plan and develop Private Fostering Briefing and Newsletter.



Sefton SCP Communications

 <p>5 Sefton SCP Newsletters published in 2022-23</p>	 <p>3 - 7 Minute Briefings published in 2022-23</p>
 <p>6 SWAY Briefings published in 2022-23</p>	 <p>1 Pan Merseyside SWAY Briefing published on Emerging Themes: Practice Learning Reviews</p>
 <p>1 multi-agency workforce survey on priorities 'Tell Us Your Truth'</p>	 <p>1 Largescale Partnership Event 'Power of the Partnership' held January 2023 and attended by over 400 practitioners.</p>
 <p>Launch of the revised Sefton Level of Need Guidance (January 2023) to the children's multi-agency workforce in Sefton.</p>	 <p>www.seftonscp.org.uk website has received over 75,000 views in the past 12 month period. The most viewed section was Sefton's Level of Need Guidance receiving over 4,700 views</p>
 <p>Sefton SCP has over 740+ followers on Twitter X @seftonscp</p>	

Legislative Guidance shared across the whole of Sefton's Children's Workforce:

- Independent Review of Children's Social Care
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)
- Prevent Duty Self-Assessment Tool for Schools
- Stable Homes: Built on Love
- Marriage and Civil Partnership Act 2022
- Domestic Abuse Act
- Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Reviews: Child Protection in England (National Review into the murders of Arthur & Star), Safeguarding children with disabilities in residential settings and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews



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Sefton Local Authority Delegated Officer (LADO) Overview

A total of 325 referrals were received from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, this is a 41% increase on the previous year. This is partly due to an increase in contacts – 27 across 2021-22 compared with 54 across 2022-23. We have also seen a post-COVID impact whereby sectors of the children’s workforce, such as residential care, early years and education are finding it more difficult to recruit experienced staff. This has led to vacancies being covered by supply staff or recruitment of staff with no previous experience in working with children. Further analysis of the contact and referral data will be included in the LADO Annual Report where the data will be compared with that from LADOs across the North West.

Ofsted

The LADO met with Ofsted inspectors on 2nd November as part of the first monitoring visit following February’s inspection of the Local Authority. Ofsted viewed the LADO tracker and scrutinised four cases. Feedback was positive. A further amendment has been made to the LADO tracker with the date LADO attended children’s strategy meetings following discussion with inspectors.

Training

In 2022-23 the LADO delivered three online briefings on managing allegations to multi-agency staff on behalf of Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership and four briefings to Sefton Local Authority Foster Carers as part of the Allegations and Safer Care training. Two bespoke sessions on managing allegations were delivered to residential staff. This was as a result of a high proportion of referrals to LADO by these organisations. A further bespoke session was delivered to ASYE social workers at Sefton MBC’s Social Work Academy. This was to ensure that newly qualified social workers understand the role of LADO and to highlight the need to invite the LADO to children’s strategy meetings where a parent/carer is employed in the children’s workforce or harm may have been caused to the child by a member of the children’s workforce.

The LADO is an accredited trainer delivering the Safer Recruitment Consortium’s courses. The LADO has delivered three Safer Recruitment in Education courses on behalf of Governor Services. These were delivered virtually over two half day sessions. The LADO also delivered two half day Refresher virtual sessions for staff in education who had previously completed the full day’s training.

The LADO is also a member of the National LADO Network Training Group. This group arranged the annual LADO conference which was delivered as a virtual event on 19th October 2022. The conference focussed upon practice needs for LADOs via peer led discussions on a range of topics; the LADO led one of the discussion groups. Feedback has been positive and is being used to inform development of a national LADO handbook with the DfE which is expected to be included as an annex to the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance.

Referrals that did not result in an open case (closed as contacts)	Allegations Opened	Total Number Referrals
54	271	325
Contacts EMPLOYMENT Sector	Allegations Opened EMPLOYMENT Sector	
13 - EDUCATION	106 - EDUCATION	
2 – FOSTERING (LA)	18 – FOSTERING (LA)	
	11 - FOSTERING (IFA)	
6 - RESIDENTIAL	65 - RESIDENTIAL	
2 – EARLY YEARS	34 - EARLY YEARS	
8 - HEALTH	5 - HEALTH	
5 – SOCIAL CARE	11 - SOCIAL CARE	
4 -POLICE	0 - POLICE	
5 - TRANSPORT	6 - TRANSPORT	
4 - VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION	8 - VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION	
1 - SPORT	5 - SPORT	

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3 - OTHER	2 - OTHER	
1 - UNKNOWN		
Contacts REFERRING Agency	Allegations Opened REFERRING Agency	
8- EDUCATION	94 - EDUCATION	
17 - SOCIAL CARE	47 - SOCIAL CARE	
	9 – FOSTERING (LA)	
	8 – FOSTERING (IFA)	
3 - RESIDENTIAL	43 - RESIDENTIAL	
1 – EARLY YEARS	27 - EARLY YEARS	
7 - POLICE	2 - POLICE	
3 - HEALTH	4 - HEALTH	
2 - OFSTED	3 - OFSTED	
9 - OTHER	22 - OTHER	
3 - VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION	7 - VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION	
1 - MILITARY CADETS	3- NSPCC	
	1 - SPORT	
	1 - PROBATION	
Contacts Category of Abuse	Allegations Opened Category of Abuse	
4 - EMOTIONAL	26 - EMOTIONAL	
12 - PHYSICAL	98 - PHYSICAL	
12 - SEXUAL	27 - SEXUAL	
9 - NEGLECT	81 - NEGLECT	
17 - OTHER	44 - OTHER	
Allegations Management Strategy Meetings Chaired by LADO	Child Strategy meetings attended	
178	16	

Outcome of Cases Concluded During 2022-23:

This data includes cases from 2019-20 and 2021-22 which were concluded in 2022-23. This may be because the referral came towards the end of the previous year, or for those cases taking 12 months or more to conclude, due to ongoing criminal investigations and court cases. In one case this was due to an ongoing case in the family courts regarding a finding of fact.

Outcome of Cases	Number	Percentage of Allegations
Threshold Not Met	55	24%
Substantiated	52	22%
Unsubstantiated	54	23%
Unfounded	56	24%
Malicious	6	3%
False (this outcome is only used in education settings)	9	4%
Total	232	

In addition to the above one case from 2021-22 concluded as a contact.

Timescale for Conclusion:

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It is the role of the LADO to ensure that the allegations management process is concluded without undue delay. 92% of allegations were dealt with in less than three months which was a significant improvement on previous years. It is anticipated that this percentage will decrease next year as there are cases which have been going through the criminal justice process which are due to conclude after more than 12 months since referral.

<u>Timescale</u>	<u>2019-20</u>	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23 cases only</u>
<u>Less than one month</u>	<u>60%</u>	<u>62%</u>	<u>58%</u>	<u>84%</u>
<u>Less than three months</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>26%</u>	<u>8%</u>
<u>Less than 12 months</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>8%</u>
<u>More than 12 months</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>0.5%</u>	<u>0.4%</u>

Additional Narrative:

- Two bespoke sessions on managing allegations were delivered to residential staff. This was as a result of a high proportion of referrals to LADO by these organisations. Since the training to those providers, referrals from them to LADO have reduced.
- The LADO has raised concerns about safeguarding practice in residential provision with Sefton's Commissioning Team and Ofsted, as well as sharing concerns regarding early years provision with Sefton's Quality Improvement Team and Ofsted.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of referrals to LADO in relation to unregulated placements. Although Sefton's plan to reduce the number of our cared for children in such placements will reduce the risk of harm to especially vulnerable children, other local authorities continue to place their children with unregulated providers without contacting the LADO beforehand. (My recommendation would be for the DCS to write to DCSs about this, or for the NW DCSs to do this jointly as other LAs are seeing the same issues arising).

The LADO challenges schools around their safer recruitment practices when it is identified that they have not been followed in relation to cases.

Sefton SCP Independent Scrutineer Observations and Activities

The role of the Independent Scrutineer is to carry out the independent scrutiny function as set out in Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018. The Independent Scrutineer will provide the critical challenge and appraisal of the multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements in relation to children and young people.

Statutory guidance requires the three safeguarding partners (which for the period covered by this report are Local Authority Chief Executive, Chief Constable of the local Police Force and Accountable Officer, Clinical Commissioning Group superseded by Chief Nurse, Integrated Care Board (with effect from July 2022) or their delegated representative) to make arrangements for independent scrutiny of the yearly report they are required to publish. Their yearly report should address:

- what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.
- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked-after children and care leavers.
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities.
- a record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements.
- ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.

I took up the role of Independent Scrutineer in early 2022 and so just prior to the period covered by this report. The statutory partners had determined that they wished to use independent scrutiny to complete discrete pieces of scrutiny activity, and, in the period covered by this report I was commissioned to complete a review of the SSCP's governance structure and to consider:

- How effectively do the safeguarding partnership arrangements enable the identification and delivery of locally agreed priorities and safeguarding partnership statutory functions.
- The extent to which the safeguarding partnership arrangements create a culture of shared accountability for identifying and delivery of locally agreed priorities and safeguarding partnership statutory functions.

The other activity that I undertook during 2022-23 was:

- 1:1 meeting with Police, Integrated Care Board and Local Authority delegated representatives for SSCP (during quarter 4)
- Attendance at Safeguarding Forum (January 23)
- Attendance at MASH strategic group (February 23)
- Joined the Children's Services Improvement Board, with effect from December 2022.

The findings from the governance review were reported in October 2022 and the recommendations are set out at pages 5-6 of this report along with the progress made at the time of writing this report i.e. October 2023. The statutory partners recognise that there has been delay in acting on these recommendations and it was following a progress report that I presented to the Children's Services Improvement Board in early April 23 that more meaningful work to progress these recommendations commenced. That report also allowed me to challenge how the partners had determined they wished to use independent scrutiny in their arrangements and with effect from June 2023, I joined the membership of the 3 key safeguarding leads (3KSLs) meeting. Positively, and since this date, I have observed a strong desire from the statutory partners to develop the safeguarding partnership arrangements and to engage with me so that critical friend support and challenge can improve their shared endeavour.

The openness of the 3KSLs in their introductory remarks about the safeguarding partnership arrangements is reflective of my own evaluation that effective safeguarding partnership arrangements, compliant with the requirements of statutory guidance, are not yet operating in Sefton. My critical friend evaluation of the content of

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this annual report, against the requirements of statutory guidance, is set out below and is intended to support lead and delegated statutory safeguarding partners in the next phase of the development of their partnership arrangements:

- A systemic approach is required to act on the findings of the SSCP governance review; this will require a relentless focus on developing the culture of partnership working including core purpose and values, ways of working and behaviours that should underpin partnership culture.
- A stronger line of sight is needed on front line practice and the experiences of children and families. The limitations of the Partnerships' performance and quality assurance arrangements significantly impedes the ability of the 3KSLs to perform their duties. Of note, it is only the Local Authority who has provided performance data for this Safeguarding Partnership yearly report.
- Leadership and governance arrangements need to ensure that statutory functions are delivered and intended actions are completed; the report describes much work as being in progress or being carried over and this was also the case in the previous yearly report. This should include the learning from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews.
- In addition to ensuring completion of intended actions, a focus on the impact of actions taken to improve the safety and wellbeing of Sefton's children is needed. Feedback from children, families and practitioners should inform this evaluation.
- Learning from the National Panel evidences the importance of leadership in creating the conditions for good safeguarding practice to flourish; a central tenant of such leadership is an approach that focuses on implementation and embedding learning rather than reliance on the development of guidance and/or dissemination of learning and training. Reflective supervision and support to frontline staff will promote learning to become embedded.
- In June 2023, revised priorities were agreed which are evidence informed and consistent with the Children's Services improvement plan priorities. The statutory partners are currently working to produce a strategic plan that will set out the actions to be taken to implement these priorities. It is understood this will include external support to assist the development of the partnership arrangements. Timely procurement of this support would be evidence of the strong desire of the 3 KSLs to develop the partnership arrangements that I refer to above being translated into action. This support should be targeted at the various layers of the partnership and its infrastructure.
- A final reflection is that the lead safeguarding partners (as named in my introductory paragraph) should review how they collectively maintain oversight of the delivery of their statutory responsibilities that they have delegated to the 3KSLs. This will also enable consideration and readiness for the forthcoming revisions to Working Together guidance.

Closing Summary

This coming year will be concentrated to a large extent on the further strengthening of our governance arrangements to improve our grip on the safeguarding system. This will include:

- Ratifying the SSCP Risk Register.
- Leading the conversations for agreement on the future priorities of the partnership.
- Refreshing the Strategic Plan to reflect the new priorities and ways of working.
- Strengthening governance and communication with other relevant boards and partnerships.
- Evaluating the impact of the progress made for the next annual report.
- Embedding greater efficiency and less duplication.

We welcome this next year and the opportunities we will create to lead the partnership in their work to:

- Mould our services in response to feedback from children and families
- Support our children and families to be the best that they can be.
- Give them the right service at the right time.
- Help and protect them in a proportionate way.
- Recognise and celebrate positive steps.
- Support transitional arrangements for those children and young people who approach a new phase of their lives and require appropriate services and resources to do this safely and effectively.

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APPENDIX 1

Sefton SCP Funding

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) states:

Working in partnership means organisations and agencies should collaborate on how they will fund their arrangements. The three safeguarding partners and relevant agencies for the local authority area should make payments towards expenditure incurred in conjunction with local multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children.

The safeguarding partners should agree the level of funding secured from each partner, which should be equitable and proportionate, and any contributions from each relevant agency, to support the local arrangements. The funding should be transparent to children and families in the area, and sufficient to cover all elements of the arrangements, including the cost of local child safeguarding practice reviews.

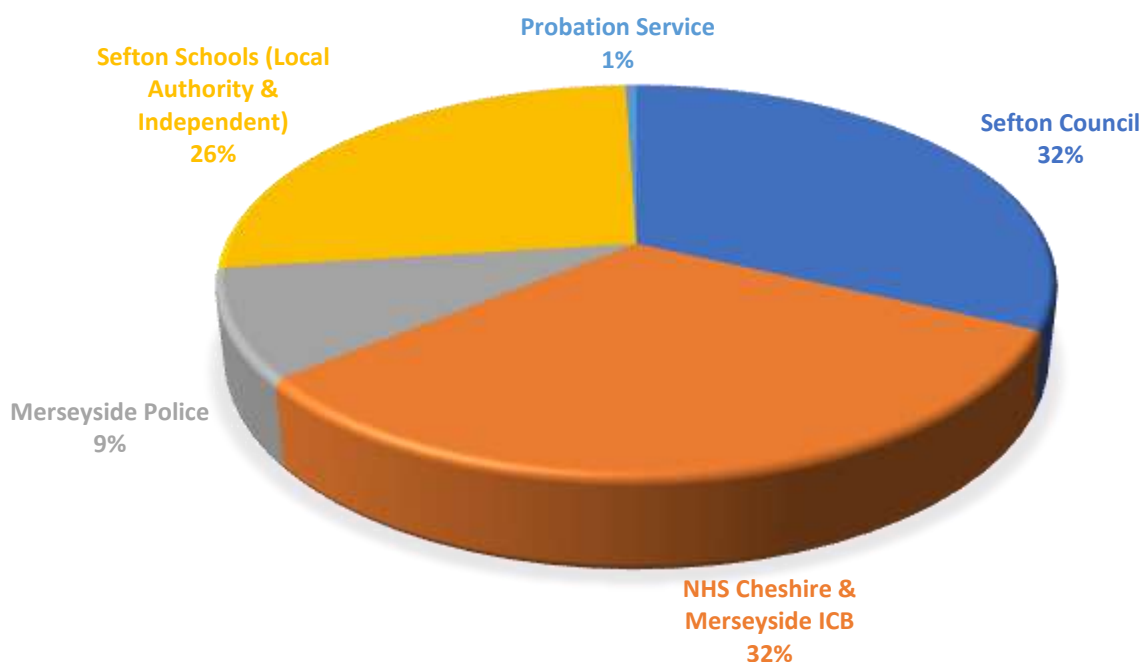
It is recognised that there are significant financial challenges across the multi-agency partnership where difficult decisions are made regularly on how to prioritise scarce resources. Given this reality, the safeguarding children partnership continues to receive financial support, without uplift, from the 3 key agencies. These monies in the main, only cover the staffing costs for four members of staff. This is agreed on a year-by-year basis which restricts the partnerships' ability to agree a long-term plan of approach for identified improvements. Sefton SCP underspend over the last several years, due to staffing vacancies, has been able to fund any identified commissioned services required throughout the year.

Sefton SCP is funded by:

- Sefton Council
- NHS Cheshire & Merseyside ICB
- Merseyside Police
- Sefton Schools & FE Colleges (Local Authority & Independent)
- National Probation Service

It is important to note that the generous contribution of work in kind from wider partner colleagues in support of the work plan of the safeguarding partnership has been gratefully received. This has included learning and development session delivery and subgroup attendance and activity.

Sefton SCP funding is illustrated below:



APPENDIX 2

Children Social Care

This narrative covers key activity into Children's Social Care for the reporting period 22/23. where available data is compared to statistical or regional averages.

During the period a total of 13490 contacts were received by the integrated front door, an average of 1124 per month. This rate was not consistent throughout the period with the first 6 months seeing an average of 1013 contacts per month compared to an average of 1234 for the second half of the period.

The main sources of contacts were:

- Police 34%
- Schools 21%
- Health 11%

Of these 13490 contacts, 4390 of them were converted into referrals into Children's Social Care, a conversion rate of 33%. This means that roughly one in every three contacts to the Front Door resulted in an intervention by Social Care. This number is significant and provides a clear illustration of one of the key features of the intervention offered to families during the period, namely that there was a significant chance of a contact resulting in a high tariff intervention. Regional conversion rates for the period are not available, but it is of note for the period 23/24 they are approx. 20%, both across the region and in Sefton. Based on the contact numbers for the period this difference equates to approx. 100 referrals per month.

The source of referrals roughly reflected the source of contacts:

- Police 34%
- Schools 20%
- Health 13%

These figures suggest that the conversion rate for all sources of contact was roughly similar, and no one source of contact was more likely to present information resulting in a referral than another.

For the period covered by the report the average rate of referral into social care was 789 per 10k (the standard unit of measurement). The rate for statistical neighbours during this period was 579, another illustration of the significant level of interventions with families at the 'social care' level with Sefton families.

This pattern in continued in the rate of 547 enquiries carried out during the period, a number which climbed from 249 per 10k at the start of the period to 373 by its end. For comparison the average rate for the period across statistical neighbours was 207 per 10k.

These high rates of 547 enquiries are reflected somewhat in the high rates of Social Care assessments undertaken with families in respect of children. Over the period this figure averaged 926 assessments per 10K, a figure considerably higher than the statistical neighbour figure of 622.

A notable feature of this high rate of assessment completion is the number of them that conclude with 'No further action'. Throughout the reporting period approximately 50% of assessments concluded with No further action, supporting a hypothesis that a number of them need not have commenced, or possibly could have been shut down at an earlier stage.

This high level of assessments that did not lead to ongoing social care intervention is perhaps one explanation for the relative lack of impact the high level of activity at the 'front end' of the service had on the cohort of children subject to Child in Need and Child protection Plans.

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Child in need Plans fell from a high of 916 open plans at the start of the period to 767 at its end, whilst child protection plans peaked at a high of 415 in July 2022, with 332 at the end of the period. During the period categories of child protection registration were as follows:

- Emotional Harm 51.6%
- Neglect 37.6%
- Physical harm 6.2%
- Sexual abuse 4.6%

Cared for children numbers remained relatively static throughout the period, beginning on 603 and ending on 611, a figure that translates to 113 per 10,000. This figure exceeds the statistical neighbour rate of 89 per 10,000 by some distance.

It is clear from the data illustrated above that ongoing exploration of the key challenges within the safeguarding system to ensure that there is a proportionate and timely response to safeguarding concerns remains. In place to achieve this, there are robust action plans to address areas of practice across the partnership that raises questions or concerns that are closely monitored by the SSCP and the Local Authority's Children's Improvement Board.

Early Help

As of 31st March 2023, Sefton's Early Help team had 1,218 open episodes for children and young people (ages ranged from unborn to 22 years of age); a rate of 18 per 1,000 of 0–22 year olds residing in the Borough. (Source ONS Census 2021 age 0-22 = 65,546)

There has been a 22.5% reduction compared to 2022 (31st March 2022 = 1,573).

Between April 2022 and March 2023 Sefton's Early Help team had 4,036 episodes started, relating to 1,768 households across Sefton. This is a reduction of 11% in the number of episodes compared to 2021/22 (4,544).

3,978 episodes were ended in 2022/23 (relating to 1,777 families), a reduction of 14% in ended episodes compared to 2021/22 (4,615).

Of the closed episodes in 2022/23, 21% had an outcome of no further action, the number of episodes ended due to this has increased considerably over the last five years (from 77 in 2015/16 to 813 in 2022/23). A further 40% of episodes had their aim achieved.

Early Help Episodes Ended Reason (2022/23)

Episode End Reason Count Percent

Aim Achieved 1,614 (40%)

Unable to Engage 760 (19%)

Further Action Required 791 (20%)

No Further Action 813 (21%)

Total 3,978 (100%)

The decline in open Early Help episodes is of concern, particularly given the continued and growing pressures within Statutory Services. However, the timescale of the data collection period does capture system changes through the development of a Targeted Family Support team from the existing Sefton Early Help resource, which may be responsible for some of this reduction, as a proportion of their work was with Children in Need rather than Early Help. Yet the 22% reduction is also potentially due to families no longer being able to self-refer and instead having to go through the integrated front door – which we know anecdotally has prevented many families accessing a service. This will be reviewed by an independent diagnostic exercise of the Integrated Front Door and any findings will be addressed to maximise service improvements. Despite the reduction in open cases, it is re-assuring to know that considerably more families have aims achieved and there is a reduction in those unable to engage.

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Over the past 6 months the Early Hep Partnership have worked on fully mapping the extent of the Early Help offer, so going forward families can be signposted to the most appropriate service or indeed find support themselves without the need to access Early Help services. In addition to this a pilot Team Around the School is due to launch in September 2023 where the focus is on a multi-agency team working together to meet need, at the earliest opportunity. To align with this, we are exploring the development of a single agency level 2 Pathway for Change assessment which it is hoped will capture more of the work of the partnership which often goes unrecorded within the data collected.

Education

- 40,596 children and young people aged 2-18 years are educated in 102 Sefton state-funded, maintained nursery, primary, secondary, sixth form, academies, special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs).
- 8 of the 74 Primary schools have converted to an Academy.
- Of the 18 Secondary schools in Sefton, 14 have converted to Academy.
- All 3 state-funded maintained Nursery schools in Sefton are rated by Ofsted as Good (67%) or Outstanding (33%).
- Most of all state-funded maintained Primary schools in Sefton are rated by Ofsted as Good (72%) or Outstanding (12%).
- None of the eighteen secondary schools are rated by Ofsted as outstanding (0%). Ten secondary schools are rated as Good (56%). One of the state-funded maintained secondary schools in Sefton are rated by Ofsted as requiring improvement (25%) and none are inadequate.
- All state-funded maintained Special schools in Sefton are rated by Ofsted as Good (60%) or Outstanding (40%).
- 24.5% of children and young people in Sefton schools are classed under Pupil Premium.
- 23.4% of pupils attending maintained schools are eligible for Free School Meals.
- 6.9% of pupils educated in Sefton have English as an additional language.
- 111 young people in total deemed to be NEET in Sefton as of 6th March 2023.

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Sefton Youth Justice Service (YJS) Offences and Incidents 2022/23

YJS Statutory - Offences 2022/23

Total number of Offences	134
Total number of children	51

Offence Types	No.	%
Arson	2	1.5%
Breach Of Bail	1	0.7%
Breach Of Conditional Discharge	1	0.7%
Breach Of Statutory Order	2	1.5%
Criminal Damage	6	4.5%
Domestic Burglary	4	3.0%
Drugs	23	17.2%
Fraud And Forgery	1	0.7%
Motoring Offences	13	9.7%
Other	5	3.7%
Public Order	15	11.2%
Racially Aggravated	1	0.7%
Robbery	5	3.7%
Theft And Handling Stolen Goods	14	10.4%
Vehicle Theft / Unauthorised Taking	4	3.0%
Violence Against The Person	37	27.6%

Offence by Gender	No.	%
Female	7	14%
Male	44	86%
Total children	51	

Offence by Age	No.	%
10	0	0.0%
11	0	0.0%
12	3	5.9%
13	4	7.8%
14	6	11.8%
15	10	19.6%
16	14	27.5%
17	14	27.5%
18	0	0.0%
19	0	0.0%
Total children	51	

*data is taken from Child View a live database

YJS OOC - Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) Incidents 2022/23

Total number of Incidents	114
Total number of children	98

Incident Types	No.	%
ASB - Knives Involved	8	7.0%
ASB - Violent Behaviour	27	23.7%
ASB - Drugs Involved	50	43.9%
ASB - Varied	29	25.4%

Incident by Gender	No.	%
Female	28	29%
Male	70	71%
Total children	98	

Incident by Age	No.	%
10	0	0.0%
11	0	0.0%
12	0	0.0%
13	3	3.1%
14	13	13.3%
15	19	19.4%
16	23	23.5%
17	24	24.5%
18	15	15.3%
19	1	1.0%
Total children	98	

During 2022/23 there were a total of 114 **incidents** carried out by 98 children that resulted in involvement from Sefton YJS for specific interventions to address their offending behaviour. Most incidents were for anti-social behaviour with drugs involved 44% (50). Of the cohort 71% (70) were male and 29% (28) were female. Most of the cohort were 17-year-old males with 24% 24.

During 2022/23 there were a total of 134 **offences** carried out by 51 children that resulted in involvement from Sefton YJS for specific interventions to address their offending behaviour. Most offences were for Violence Against Person 27.6% (37). Of the cohort 86% (44) were male and 14% (7) were female. Most of the cohort were 16- and 17-year-old males with 27.5% (14).

There were 248 offences and incidents during 2022/23 committed by 147 children, most offences and incidents committed were for drugs and violence.

The latest profile (May 22) highlights that violence remains the top offence followed by drug related offences. 48% of children were involved with Children Social Care, 52% of the children live in the top 30% of the most deprived areas nationally. Approximately 46% of children had issues with their mental health. Clearly these figures fluctuate as the cohort changes which is tracked biannually.

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	4 June 2024
Subject:	Work Programme 2024/25, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Children Schools and Families		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To:

- seek the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2024/25;
- to identify any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the latest Key Decision Forward Plan;
- note the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2024/25;
- note that the topics of ASD/ADHD Services, Child Poverty and Health Inequalities in care experienced children are being explored as a potential items for in-depth scrutiny during 2024/25; and
- to receive an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations:

That:

- (1) the Work Programme for 2024/25, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be noted, along with any additional items to be included and agreed;
- (2) items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan which fall under the remit of the Committee, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be considered and any agreed items be included in the work programme referred to in (1) above;
- (3) the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2024/25, as set out at Appendix B be noted;
- (4) It be noted that the topics of ASD/ADHD Services, Child Poverty and Health Inequalities in Care Experienced Children are being considered for in-depth

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scrutiny by Members of the Committee during 2024/25 and relevant activities are included in the schedule of the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2024/25, as set out at Appendix B; and

- (5) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To determine the Work Programme of items to be considered during the Municipal Year 2024/25; identify scrutiny review topics which would demonstrate that the work of the Overview and Scrutiny “adds value” to the Council; and to comply with a decision of the Committee to update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The pre-scrutiny process assists Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues before making formal decisions.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

No alternative options have been considered as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to approve its Work Programme and identify scrutiny review topics.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications arising from the consideration of a key decision or relating to a recommendation arising from a Working Group review will be reported to Members at the appropriate time.

(A) **Revenue Costs** – see above

(B) **Capital Costs** – see above

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): None
Legal Implications: None
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.
Impact on Children and Young People: Yes Any direct implications on the impact on children and young people are set out within the report.
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will

Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report. Any climate emergency implications arising from the consideration of reports referred to in the Work Programme will be contained in such reports when they are presented to Members at the appropriate time.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: None directly applicable to this report. Reference in the Work Programme to any other reports could impact on the Council's Core Purposes, in which case they will be referred to in the report when submitted.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: As Above
Commission, broker and provide core services: As Above
Place – leadership and influencer: As Above
Drivers of change and reform: As Above
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: As Above
Greater income for social investment: As Above
Cleaner Greener: As Above

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Work Programme Report is not subject to FD/LD consultation. Any specific financial and legal implications associated with any subsequent reports arising from the Work Programme report will be included in those reports as appropriate.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

Contact Officer:	Laura Bootland
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2078
Email Address:	laura.bootland@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

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The following appendices are attached to this report:

- Appendix A - Work Programme for 2024/25;
- Appendix B – Informal Workshops / Site Visits 2024/25

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Introduction/Background

1. WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

- 1.1 The Work Programme of items to be submitted to the Committee during the Municipal Year 2024/25 is set out at **Appendix A** to the report. The programme has been produced in liaison with the appropriate Heads of Service, whose roles fall under the remit of the Committee.
- 1.2 Members are requested to consider whether there are any other items that they wish the Committee to consider, that fall within the terms of reference of the Committee. The Work Programme will be submitted to each meeting of the Committee during 2024/25 and reviewed/updated, as appropriate.
- 1.3 During the 2023/24 Municipal Year, the Committee agreed the following items for consideration during 2024/25:
 - Meeting with the 'Making a Difference' Group. This has now been arranged for Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 6pm.
- 1.5 **The Committee is requested to comment on the Work Programme for 2024/25, as appropriate, and note that additional items may be added to the Programme during the next Municipal Year.**

2. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS / INFORMAL MEETINGS / BRIEFING SESSIONS 2024/25

- 2.1 The Committee has agreed to hold informal briefing sessions, as and when required, rather than establish a traditional working group, during 2024/25.
- 2.2 A schedule of the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2024/25, is set out at Appendix B.
- 2.3 The schedule will be updated during the Municipal Year as lines of enquiry develop and sessions take place.
- 2.4 **The Committee is requested to comment on the schedule of informal activities to be undertaken during 2024/25 and note that additional items may be added to the schedule at future meetings of the Committee.**

3. PRE-SCRUTINY OF ITEMS IN THE KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

- 3.1 Members may request to pre-scrutinise items from the Key Decision Forward Plan which fall under the remit (terms of reference) of this Committee. The Forward Plan, which is updated each month, sets out the list of items to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration during the next four-month period.
- 3.2 The pre-scrutiny process assists the Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.
- 3.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has requested that only those key decisions that fall under the remit of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be included on the agenda for consideration.
- 3.4 The latest Forward Plan published on 30 April 2024, for the four-month period June-September 2024, contains no key decisions that fall under the remit of the Committee, on this occasion.
- 3.5 There are no items within the current Plan that falls under the remit of the Committee on this occasion. The next Forward Plan, covering the period 1 July to 31 October 2024 will be published on 31 May. Committee Members will be advised if any items that fall under the remit of the Committee are published.
- 3.6 Should Members require further information in relation to any item on the Key Decision Forward Plan, would they please contact the relevant Officer named against the item in the Plan, prior to the Meeting.

4. SCRUTINY TRAINING PROPOSALS

4.1

Two 'Introduction to Scrutiny' workshop sessions have been organised for scrutiny members on Monday 17th June at 15:00 and 17:00. These sessions are primarily aimed at new councillors following the 2024 local elections, but will also serve as a "re-fresh" for existing Members..

Support for all Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs

- 4.3 A request has been made to offer training support for all Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs and arrangements are currently being considered.

Mentor Support for the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)

Arrangements have been made and support is on-going.

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All Member Corporate Parenting Briefing

The Council's Corporate Parenting Officer is providing in-house mandatory Corporate Parenting training, as in previous years.

Four alternative one-hour briefing sessions have been arranged remotely via Microsoft Teams during 2024/25. Four sessions have been held to date, as follows:

4.3 **The Committee is requested to note the training proposals.**

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE INFORMAL WORK PROGRAMME MEETING

5.1 Members and Substitutes were invited to attend an informal work programming session prior to the meeting of the Committee on 20 May 2024.

5.2 The following topics were narrowed down as potential items for in-depth scrutiny during 2024/25:

- ASD/ADHD Services
- Child Poverty
- Health Inequalities for Care Experienced Children

5.3 Members requested visits to the Councils Children's Social Work Team and School SEND Hubs.

5.4 An open invite was extended to the Children's Services Commissioner to attend a meeting of the Committee or an informal session.

5.5 Members reflected on the work carried out on the scrutiny review on SEND in 2023/24 and suggested several areas where potential recommendations could be made. Further work on any recommendations will be required to fully draw the review to a close and reported to the committee in due course.

6. LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6.1 During the October/November 2019 cycle of meetings, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees considered a report on the guidance produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government relating to Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities following on from the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's inquiry into Overview and Scrutiny. This Committee considered the matter at its meeting held on 15 October 2019 (Minute No. 32 refers).

6.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees all agreed the recommendations contained in the report, one of which being that updates on Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (LCRCAO&S) be included in the Work Programme report considered at each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

6.3 In accordance with the above decision, information on the LCRCAO&S is set out below.

6.4 **Role**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established by the Combined Authority in May 2017 in accordance with the Combined Authorities Order 2017.

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to:

- Scrutinise the decision and actions taken by the Combined Authority or the Metro Mayor;
- Provide a “critical friend” to policy and strategy development;
- Undertake scrutiny reviews into areas of strategic importance for the people of the Liverpool City Region; and
- Monitor the delivery of the Combined Authority’s strategic plan.

6.5 **Membership**

The Committee is made up of 3 elected Members from each of the constituent Local Authorities of the LCR Combined Authority, along with one elected Member from both the Liverpool City Region Liberal Democrat Group and the Liverpool City Region Conservative Group.

Sefton’s appointed Members are Councillors Desmond, Hart (Scrutiny Link) and Hinde.

The LCR O&S Committee also include Representatives of the Liberal Democrat Groups and Conservative Groups from the Local Authorities on the LCR O&S.

5.6 **Chair and Vice-Chair**

The Chair of the LCRCAO&S cannot be a Member of the majority group. The Chair is appointed at the first meeting of the Committee of the Municipal Year.

5.7 **Quoracy Issues**

A high number of meetings of the LCRCAO&S have been inquorate in the past.

The quorum for meetings of the LCRCAO&S is 14, two-thirds of the total number of members, 20. This high threshold is not set by the Combined Authority but is set out in legislation.

The Combined Authority’s Monitoring Officer will be looking to work with the Monitoring Officers from the other Combined Authorities to identify what problems they are experiencing with Scrutiny and how/if they had overcome them. Representations to Government would also be considered once all options locally

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to resolve the quorum issue had been exhausted. The CA Monitoring Officer would then be able to provide evidence to Government that the quorum level was obstructing the work of scrutiny within the CA.

5.8 **Meetings**

Information on all meetings and membership of the LCRCAO&S can be obtained using the following link:

<https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=365&Year=0>

5.9 **Latest Meeting**

Details of all meetings can be obtained using the link referred to above. The next meeting will be held on 3 July 2024

5.10 ***The Committee is requested to note the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.***



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING)
WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

Tuesday, 4 June 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Bootle

No.	Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
1.	Cabinet Member Update Reports	Laura Bootland
2.	Changes to the Front Door/Family Hubs	Jacque Finlay/Alex Jones
3.	Children's Services Improvement Programme – Verbal Update	Risthardh Hare
4.	Children's Social Care Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement	Joe Banham
5.	Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership - Annual Report 2023/24	Joe Banham
6.	Work Programme Update	Laura Bootland

Tuesday, 24 September 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Southport

No.	Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
1.	Cabinet Member Update Reports	Laura Bootland
2.	Children's Services Improvement Programme	Risthardh Hare
3.	Children's Social Care Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement	Joe Banham
4.	SEND Dashboard	Lynda Poole
5.	Education Scorecard (Summer Term)	Lynda Poole
6.	Ofsted Inspection Report (Summer Term)	Jacqui Patterson
7.	Work Programme Update	Laura Bootland

Tuesday 12 November 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Bootle		
No.	Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
1.	Cabinet Member Update Reports	Laura Bootland
2.	Children's Services Improvement Programme	Risthardh Hare
3.	Children's Social Care Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement	Joe Banham
4.	SEND Dashboard	Lynda Poole
5.	Work Programme Update	Laura Bootland

Tuesday, 28 January 2025, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Southport		
No.	Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
1.	Cabinet Member Update Reports	Laura Bootland
2.	Children's Services Improvement Programme	Risthardh Hare
3.	Children's Social Care Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement	Joe Banham
4.	Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2023/24	Karen Gray
5.	SACRE Annual Report 2023/24	Ian Ross
6.	SEND Dashboard	Lynda Poole
7.	Work Programme Update	Laura Bootland

Tuesday, 18 March 2025, 6.30 p.m. Town Hall, Bootle		
No.	Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
1.	Cabinet Member Update Reports	Laura Bootland
2.	Children's Services Improvement Programme	Risthardh Hare
3.	Children's Social Care Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement	Joe Banham
4.	Ofsted Inspection Reports (Autumn Term)	Jacqui Patterson
5.	Education Scorecard (Autumn Term)	Lynda Poole
6.	SEND Dashboard	Lynda Poole
7.	Work Programme Update	Laura Bootland

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING)
INFORMAL MEETINGS / WORKSHOPS 2024/25**

No.	Report/Item	Organiser
1.	<p>Work Programme Session - 20th May 2024 at 5pm (Teams).</p> <p>Prior to the first formal Committee meeting for the Municipal Year on 4 June 2024, an informal meeting of Committee Members and Substitutes took place to consider matters to be raised during the Municipal Year 2024/25.</p>	Laura Bootland/Debbie Campbell
2.	<p>Emotional Health & Wellbeing Services (July 2024)</p> <p>Following on from the informal meeting on Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services in September 2023, a further session was requested on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADHD/ASD Services – To look at referral pathways, with a view to doing further work on this subject area. 	Laura Bootland/Jo Herndlhofer
3.	<p>SEND Dashboard – 15th July 2024 at 5.30pm (Teams).</p> <p>Informal meeting in July to explain the Dashboard to Members ahead of it being included on formal agendas.</p>	Laura Bootland/Lynda Poole
4.	<p>Complaints (October 2024)</p> <p>Informal meeting to consider complaints received by Children's Services</p>	Laura Bootland/Paul Bayliss/Catherine Larkin

5.	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (February/March 2025) Informal follow up meeting from the formal meeting in March 2024	Laura Bootland/Alex Jones
6.	Child Poverty (September 2024) An informal meeting to consider Child Poverty	Laura Bootland/Helen Armitage
7.	Health Inequalities for Children in Care (Date TBC) An informal meeting to consider health inequalities between care experienced children and non-care experienced children	Laura Bootland/TBC
8.	Meeting(s) with Groups To meet with the Making a Difference (MAD) Group – Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 6pm (Bootle Town Hall).	Laura Bootland/Cheryl Yates
9.	Visits Social Work Teams, Magdalen House – TBC SEND Hubs – Schools - TBC	Laura Bootland