

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) 16 November 2021		
Councillor	Portfolio	Date
Mhairi Doyle	Cabinet Member Children's Social Care	16 November 2021

Children's Services continues the Improvement Journey. The Improvement Board has convened four times since the last Group meeting and is now held monthly. The Board continues to be Independently chaired and attended by both Lead Members, Councillor Doyle and Councillor Roscoe, Chief Executive and key statutory partners for Health, Police and Schools. The Improvement Board had reports on the following areas:

- Multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements have been finalized forming a Safeguarding Children Forum to replace the former LSCB and a Leadership Board consisting of the 3 statutory agencies CSC, Police and CCGs.
- Deep dive on children who are missing/at risk of sexual exploitation – this has resulted in a new pathway for this group of vulnerable children with a dedicated post of Child Sexual Exploitation officer for multi-agency work
- Data scorecard – covering key areas of children's performance. This will be developed to include narrative of key areas.
- Workforce development report -see below
- Reports from the DfE advisor and Improvement Board chair which included their observations on practice week.

Improvements across the service have continued at pace and it is recognised that our workforce is key to these improvements. There has therefore been a review of our workforce strategy including recruitment and retention of key posts within the service. A range of proposals and ideas have been submitted and are currently being explored, these include: Branding, advertising and social media comms development- this is currently in development including a dedicated platform for people interested in becoming a social worker.

- Incentives and retention for social workers who join Sefton as permanent members of staff
- Free car parking for all social work staff.
- Our training and development offer is well considered amongst staff. We will ensure this captured within our social work adverts.
- Flexible working policy to be promoted. Continued promotion of agile and flexible working patterns where the business need is consistent.

Practice week -took place for 3 days in October with CEO, Lead Members, DfE advisor, Improvement Board chair and other officers in children's services observing practice.

There was also a range of workshops run by key staff to highlight key developments in areas such as children missing, children involved in sexual exploitation and organised crime/gang activity. The feedback on this was positive and the areas that were marked for development have been actioned through the service.

MASH- the remodelling of the front door has begun providing a single point of entry to the service and the creation of an assessment team. This has seen a significant increase in referrals coming through to MASH which was expected as we closed other points of contacts off. There are plans to remodel other parts of the service so that children's and family's needs can be met more appropriately at an earlier stage. This work will involve creating a court and protection team which will alleviate some of the pressures currently felt in the Localities.

Fostering-the service is currently undergoing a review with Sefton audit, reviewing from a regulatory perspective. This will then form an action plan for Fostering. An improvement board will oversee the improvements in the service and will start December 21.

A Foster Carer Association is being developed to ensure carers meet with Senior managers and Members each quarter and are involved in the development of the service going forward.

The service has currently had a new brand and a marketing campaign is set to start in January 2022. Independent fostering assessors have been recruited to start the assessments following this and to ensure these are completed swiftly and are of a good quality. Interviews are taking place in the next couple of weeks for a new Fostering panel chair and the service at the end of November will restructure in to 4 definite teams, with a placement team, combining with the commissioning function, joining in the New Year.

Adoption

The AIMS contract is due to be extended for another year. This year to date 14 children have been adopted, an increase on last year's 7 children and there are now 16 children waiting, a decrease from 34 in July. Adoption tracking meetings continue to monitor the progress of children where adoption has been identified as the plan.

Corporate Parenting-the Corporate Parenting Board is adopting a champion model with key activity and task and finish projects to deliver outcomes and priorities for care experienced children. A presentation was presented this week to the board which looked at the 5 new priorities and how us as Corporate parents will meet these. A participation officer post has been created to work with Children in Care and to create a Children in Care council.

The Corporate Parenting service has increased management capacity and has gone from 3 managers to 5 with the formulation of a new adolescent service. This means Corporate Parenting will be working with children 0-13years and adolescence 14-18yrs. The service has introduced the next steps multi agency panel. The focus of the panel is to ensure children moving on from care have appropriate plans and skills in place to enable them to live independently.

The leaving care service is supported by an additional team manager and therefore being split into two. This will enable the service to work with children from 16yrs, a personal advisor will be allocated to each young person to support their transition to adulthood.