

CABINET MEMBER REPORT

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

(Children's Services and Safeguarding)

Councillor	Portfolio	Date
Mhairi Doyle	Cabinet Member Children's Social Care	27 September 2022

Children's Social Care

- All staff within Children's Services (including Education) are in the process of moving into one building (Magdalene house), which will provide a greater line of sight and support to staff within the service.
- The Assistant Director for Early Help and Protection is currently being advertised.
- Recruitment across the Service Manager roles is ongoing. One Service manager has recently come into post with another 4 due to start by the end of October. This will result in 8 permanent Service Managers in post. There is currently an advert out for the remaining 3 Service Manager posts that have not yet been recruited to.
- A diagnostic by Sunderland 'Together for Children' was completed on Liquid Logic. The report and associated recommendations has been provided.
- The Children's Services improvement plan has been completed and submitted to Ofsted. Briefings on the improvement plan have been undertaken to IPC, Overview and Scrutiny and there are planned staff events w/c 29th September. Service plans across all parts of the service been devised with the support of strategic support.
- Currently receiving support and training through an experienced Department of Education (DfE) consultant, on our support and offer to care experienced children and those who are transitioning into adulthood. Training has been delivered to staff and is due to be provided to partner agencies in the coming months.
- Refreshed performance reports have been launched to aid and assist practitioners and managers.
- The launch of the Caring business charter took place on the 21st July.
- Relaunch of the care experienced DWP protocol is due to take place in September. Which provided greater support and clarity for cared for children applying for benefits.
- Refresh and launch of the quality assurance framework.
- Ongoing recruitment is taking place for the Social Work Academy, with a planned launch date of October 2022.
- Working with a company on international recruitment of Social Workers is ongoing. We hope to achieve 20 experienced qualified Social Workers to come into post from Africa at the beginning of 2023.
- We will be launching two new services in late September and early October. The "Family Time Team" will be focussed on ensuring supportive, fun and safe contact between children and their parents whilst they are in care proceedings on in alternative care settings. This team will bring evidence based approaches to an essential aspect of ensuring a child's identity.

- The Targeted Family Support Team will be offering a focussed and intense programme of support for those families who require help outside of the statutory framework. Based on ideas from Multi-systemic practice the programme seeks to help families achieve goals whilst also giving them life experience to tackle problems.
- Work continues to be underway with the new approach to working with children affected by Extra Familial Harm. The new "S.P.A.C.E. service (named by our young people) is a multi-agency approach to reducing risk in both the present and future terms.

Youth Justice Service

Performance

- YJS performance remain positive. There has been a reduction in reoffending which has continued to reduce over the last 4 years. This is reflected nationally too. More children are dealt with through out of court disposals which has reduced the number of first time entrants into the judicial system and there was a small reduction in out of court disposals during 2021 compared to 2020.
- Sefton's custody rates have remained at zero for a prolonged period, however one child not already known to YJS, is currently on remand for the murder of an adult male and another child has been remanded with Possession of Class A Drugs with Intent to Supply. YJS has a duty to assess, support and visit both children who is detained within the secure estate.

Critical Learning Reviews

- Two reviews have recently been undertaken which relate to attempt suicide incidents involving children, one of whom was open to the YJS at the time and another who had been and was expected to come back to the service because of impending matters. The approach of Sefton YJS is to hold reviews in order to establish good practice and learning points even if there is no statutory responsibility to do so.

Some of the key learning points across the two cases are:

1. There is clear evidence of joint working between YJS and CSC which is not always as strong as it needs to be in the context of information sharing. This is likely to be resolved as the YJS moves into Children's Services (sept 22)
 2. There were plans to change one girl's cared for arrangements which had a detrimental impact on her leading to adverse reactions and emotional stress
 3. There are some 'system' issues to unpick around the CAMHS support and how accessible the appointments were for the child
 4. Education issues existed for both children relating to a long history of poor or non-attendance at school
 5. There are some issues around the number of professionals that work with children and whether some issues were addressed too late with too many professionals intervening
 6. It was highlighted that there should be a formal process to notify partners and share information when an incident of attempt suicide / serious self-harm takes place.
- These issues have been shared with partners. In addition, YJS have developed a draft process to disseminate information following an attempt suicide incident which will be agreed by partners at the YJS Partnership in October 22.

Female Cohort Mapping

- Following a number of attempt suicides and other significant incidents involving young females in or associated to the YJS cohort, an audit was undertaken of girls accessing the YJS within Quarter 1 2022. This sample comprised sixteen girls and the headlines are as follows.

There were some concerning facts which are as follows:

- 15 girls were identified as being at risk of child exploitation
- 75% were on a MACE plan and 3 were known to associate with gangs.
- 50% had EHCP plans, and school attendance was identified as an issue.
- 5 girls were diagnosed with ADHD and 3 girls with ASD.
- 5 girls had attempted suicide and 3 of those girls had links to a young person who sadly died last year following a suicide attempt
- For the majority there were concerns about early sexual experiences
- 11 had difficulties with the mental health
- There was prevalent drug and alcohol use
- 4 girls had disclosed sexual abuse
- 12 girls had experienced domestic abuse in the home
- 8 girls were identified as having parents with substance misuse difficulties
- 5 girls had experienced neglect from a young age
- There was a clear link between the young people either living within the north locality or spending significant periods of time in the Southport area.
- All of the girls within the cohort were known to Children Social Care with current interventions.
- Although the police and other agency systems did not suggest a link between all the young girls with attempt suicide or self-harm episodes, the board felt as though more were probably associated or knew each other than our systems suggested, such as through social media. There is a concern around the North Sefton area due to the number of such episodes that have happened both before and after the death of a 12 year old girl in June 2021, although it could be misleading to suggest that there is a spate of associated attempt suicide episodes.
- Partners agreed that there is a requirement for more robust early intervention and prevention services as many of the children had been known to multiple services for a significant length of time. In addition, some children were experiencing 'too much too late' with many agencies involved with the child and family without making any notable impact.

Violent Crime

- The YJS have reviewed violence offences due to the prevalence of this offence type. The police are seeing more "peer on peer" violence, often stemming from online or school bullying. The YJS cohort analysis substantiated this with less offences linked to child on parent violence. The vulnerabilities and risks of the cohort are significant factors, child exploitation, the number of times they are missing, and adverse life experiences was a common feature for the majority of young people. There are further discussions taking place with the Integrated Care Framework Vanguard to develop opportunities to tackle violence and child mental health through a bid to the Violence Reduction Partnership.