

<b>Report to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Tuesday 6 June 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Children's Services Improvement Programme		
<b>Report of:</b>	Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Children's Social Care		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	No	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	No.
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

**Summary:** To update members of the Committee on progress made on the Improvement Programme.

**Recommendation(s):**

(1) To consider and note progress made.

**Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

To ensure that members of Committee are aware of the progress made.

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

NA

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs**

There are no direct revenue implications with this report. Members will be aware that the Council's three year Medium Term Financial Plan takes account of this Improvement Programme and the resources required to support it.

**(B) Capital Costs**

There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

**Implications of the Proposals:**

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b>
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**Legal Implications:****Equality Implications:**

There are no equality implications associated with this report.

**Impact on Children and Young People: Yes**

The actions in the Improvement Plan are designed to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in Sefton. The Council recognises that it cannot deliver sustainable change without working together with wider partners across Sefton. Organisations from the public sector, schools, voluntary, community and private sector will need to work side by side to provide the support that our children and young people and their families need. It is our collective responsibility to create the right conditions for vulnerable children and young people to thrive.

**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 Climate Emergency implications associated with this report.

**Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable: The Improvement Programme seeks to deliver change across Children's Services whose activity protects and supports those children and young people who have complex care needs.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Children's Services work with partners to support families in need of support and improve resilience.

Commission, broker and provide core services: Children's Services work with partners to support families in need of support and improve resilience.

Place – leadership and influencer: The Council will take a lead role in work with partners to deliver change in Children's Services

Drivers of change and reform: The Council will work with partners to deliver change in Children's Services.

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: NA

Greater income for social investment: NA

Cleaner Greener NA

## **What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

### **(A) Internal Consultations**

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7238/23.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5438/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

### **(B) External Consultations**

The Executive Director Children's Service and Education and his leadership team engage with partners across Sefton regarding the Improvement Programme. The voice of children, young people and their families will be integral to delivering change.

### **Implementation Date for the Decision**

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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### **Appendices:**

There are no appendices to this report.

### **Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Members of the Committee will recall that of the Children's Serviced Improvement Programme continues to comprise of four themes;
- Quality - Ensuring the right staff are in the right place at the right time to deliver a consistent standard of good quality safeguarding services to children and families.
  - Improving Implementation of Learning - Using what we know and learn to continuously improve and enhance the services we deliver for children and families.
  - Improving Tools - Ensuring we have the right tools to enable the workforce to deliver high quality services for children and families.
  - Improving Strategic Partnerships - Effective partnership working to enable the delivery of common goals and a high quality multi-agency response for children and families.
- 1.2 The Improvement Plan also identifies four key areas that will be strengthened through the actions included; -
- Corporate Leadership
  - Governance & Partnerships
  - Practice
  - Enablers & Resources
- 1.3 The first two phases have involved significant change in Children's Services, this report updates on progress to date and the draft of Phase 3 of the Improvement Plan is currently in development.

## 2. Progress

- 2.1 The Council has approved a [Medium Term Financial Plan \(MTFP\)](#) which commits to recurrent additional investment for a three-year period improvement programme. The Improvement Plan informed the development of the MTFP with the Director of Children's Services advising the Chief Executive, s151 Officer and Deputy s151 Officer via a series of meetings on the resources required to fund the service. The investment made is intended to ensure that resources remain available to truly embed the change that is needed. Although currently there are only one-year settlements, the Council has prioritised this three-year commitment and provided assurance that this investment will be maintained into years 4 and 5 of this cycle.
- 2.2 To ensure the judicious use of resources the Director of Children's Services and the s151 Officer will continue to work closely together ensuring that strategic and financial planning are aligned. Through this ongoing dialogue the Council will be able to:
- Actively monitor and track the changes that will deliver the MTFP designed to enable and sustain short- and long-term improvements for example the impact of investing in the Social Work Academy and the deployment of the 2023 graduates, as well as recruiting 23 international social workers, so further stabilising the workforce and reducing the spend on agency workers.

- Make best use of the investment in Children's Social Care, deploying agreed additional resources to increase the pace of change, address backlogs and progress.
- Identify further opportunities for improvement and support the development of supporting business cases which will steer investment where it is needed and focus on long term priorities aimed at reducing future demand.

2.3 The Council has recognised that recruitment and retention of the right, stable and focused leadership team and wider workforce is critical. To combat recruitment and retention challenges the Council has taken a number of steps including:

- The creation of a new employer brand for Children's Services which is becoming increasingly recognised through external marketing and communications activity in order to target and recruit individuals who have the necessary skills to make a difference to families and young people across Sefton.
- Implementation of a further set of retention payments, changes to out of borough car mileage rates and Essential Car User Allowance.
- Co-location of the Children's Services team into one building with open planned spaces with areas for learning and a space for children and young people.
- Establishment of a Social Work Academy so that people returning to Social Work and Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYEs) are supported throughout their accredited year through protected caseloads, intensive coaching and robust supervision.
- Approval of additional resources of £20m being provided for next year to reflect the budget requirement to deliver the service as set out by the Director of Children's Services (DCS).
- The recruitment of 23 international Social Workers.
- Demonstrating a commitment to ongoing professional development through the Family Valued model, development and training opportunities for managers and a commitment to delivering embedding good supervision.

These actions have included ensuring a stable and experienced leadership team is in place to lead the change and develop a consistent standard of good quality services to children and families. Although the DCS post is currently being recruited to, the leadership team is stable with the interim DCS being an existing Assistant Director and the team continues to have a strong commitment to improving the quality of professional practice and robust management oversight and taking suitable action when needed.

The impact of these actions has been recognised by Ofsted, inspectors have said:

*"Care has been taken to bring together children's services staff into a single location and improve working conditions. Social workers and managers are very positive about working for Sefton. Social workers report that senior leaders are highly visible and this is supporting a culture of openness and engagement. This makes them feel valued. Although social workers spoke positively about the support they receive from their*

*line managers, there continues to be gaps in the regularity of supervision, and this is not consistently effective.”*

and:

*“Recruitment and retention continue to be a significant challenge in Sefton. High vacancy rates across locality teams mean that there is a high reliance on agency social workers. The retention package has recently been improved. Some progress is being made in recruiting social workers from overseas, with 20 social workers due to start by the end of May. The newly developed social work academy is enabling a considerable number of newly qualified social workers to develop core skills in a supportive environment. Protected caseloads allow these social workers to receive routine training and regular supervision while being able to carry out thorough work with children and their families. The quality of recording and planning in this team is more detailed than seen in other parts of the service. This is assisting the service to grow its own workforce. “*

- 2.4 The changes made have also led to the appointment of 11 permanent Service Managers, 24 Team Managers, and two Quality Improvement Managers who are also permanent. The combination of recruitment activity, deployment of graduates from the Academy and the recruitment of the international Social Workers means that by September 2023 over 50 more permanent staff will be in place.

The recruitment of additional capacity, development of the Academy and changes to the way of working have all contributed to more manageable caseloads. At the time of writing this report current caseloads within the Assessment teams range from 26 to 31 children but this is affected by factors such as being on duty. Officers are currently recruiting an additional team to this service to help support improved practice. Within our team which work with families on Children In Need or Child Protection Plans the average case load is between 14 and 24 children. Children With Complex Needs, which was highlighted in the last monitoring visit as a team with high caseloads has a current average of between 20 and 24 children. Within our Corporate Parenting team, a Social Worker will have an average case load of between 10 and 15 children which is varied by age range. Whilst recognised that the complexity in families over recent years has increased and this must be reflected in a reduction of allocated families it is still important to recognise that the caseloads have significantly reduced over the last twelve months, despite continuing high demands within the service.

- 2.5 To improve the pace of recruitment activity the Improvement Team has implemented a fast-track application process for Social Workers and will work with the Children’s Leadership Team to ensure a smooth transition for the graduates of the Academy and will also support a warm welcome for the international Social Workers.
- 2.6 Stabilisation of the workforce remains a priority. The Improvement Team will work with Corporate HR and Children’s Services to improve the analysis and usage of workforce information. It is anticipated that this will better inform operational workforce planning. The Improvement Team will also continue to track local rates of pay.

- 2.7 The Council and partners recognise the importance of building the right culture, ethos and values to sustain improvement and that this takes time.

The initial phases of the Improvement Plan put in place the foundations for cultural change within Children's Services through visible leadership, the co-location of staff and the introduction of Practice Standards. Through good communication and engagement with the workforce the Children's Leadership team changed the rhetoric away from uncertainty, clearly articulating the need for change, describing what good practice looks like, demonstrating a clear commitment to develop staff from within ([People Strategy](#)) through the Academy and the Family Valued Model, and most importantly of all, having high aspiration and ambition for the children of Sefton.

To date the Children's Leadership team has actively engaged frontline staff and drawing on their ideas to develop a long-term vision and a strategic plan for delivering high-quality front-line practice. Staff engagement sessions are held on a regular basis.

- 2.8 Demonstrating the impact of cultural change can take time, however, during the second Monitoring Visit Ofsted recognised

*"The co-location of social work teams in a single office base is supporting a positive change in culture. There is greater visibility of the DCS and the management team, and social workers feel more confident that they are supported in their practice and that they are valued. Social workers have a better understanding of practice expectations, through the introduction of practice standards."*

And

*"Social workers are positive about the change in culture in Sefton, describing a supportive working environment with a highly visible DCS and senior managers, which has been further enhanced by the co-location of social work teams. Social workers feel listened to and valued and are trying their very best to help improve children's lives. Social workers are positive about the reduction of caseloads and the introduction of relationship-based practice."*

- 2.9 The creation of the Family Time Team took place in October 2022, with this team, working closely with Social Workers, ensures that for families going through court processes that their time together is beneficial, engaging and as fun as possible. This change has made a real difference to families, below is some feedback from families:



Menai Family Well Being Centre is a much better setting than where he has previously had sessions. He was really happy with the room used because he knew his son would enjoy exploring the light sensory room. Dad and son went on to spend the majority of the session in the light sensory room sharing some quality bonding time together. - A Sefton Dad



This centre is so much better for my children, there is lots of space for my children and lots more for them to do. It feels more homely and feels less like a contact centre. - A Sefton Mum



It was my first contact here and I was made to feel comfortable as soon as I walked through the doors, I was excited to see my son but also nervous at the same time. It's a lovely centre and I felt at ease and my nerves went away. - A Sefton Mum



I had a lovely time with my son and a lovely experience, I am going to make a memory book and I am excited to be doing Halloween activities. I received photographs and videos on my way home through WhatsApp and will cherish this. - A Sefton Mum



2.10 In parallel the Targeted Family Support Team was created, and this was a key element of the improvement work needed to improve the support to those families who do not require statutory Social Care. This team offers an intensive 12 to 20 week programme to families who need extra support. Applying an evidenced based approach based on Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) the team works intensively with consenting families within their own homes. They aim to:

- Reduce re-referral rates for Early Help and Children's Social Care.
- Reduce cases escalating to higher thresholds.
- Provide support at the right time to the right families.
- Reduce the need for children coming into care later in life.
- Provide exit planning into Universal Services and support partner agencies to be confident in supporting these families in the future.

2.11 The interface between Early Help and statutory work is now more clearly and effectively differentiated. This change has been received positively by families and examples of feedback received are below:



*When you became involved with my family you approached with empathy and compassion and unconditional positive regard. This approach empowered my family and especially myself to feel safe enough*

*to talk open and freely with out judgement or feeling belittled.*

*I know you went above and beyond in the fight for <the child's>s education. I was so overwhelmed with this situation I don't know how we would have got through this with out your care, compassion, support and knowledge.*

*I didn't know who or how to go about challenging <establishment> and fighting for <the child>*

*Debbie if this was the Olympic's then you have won the gold medal!!!!*

*You encouraged me to continue to fight when I had no fight left in me.*

*Your continued support throughout this battle has been truly amazing and again I can't thank you enough!!!!*

*You know myself and the Boys have rigid thought processes but you gently challenged us when needed.*

*This allowed me to see things differently and clearly and from someone else's perspective.*

*You validated my thoughts and feelings and*

*when appropriate challenged them especially when I was spiralling or out of line.*

*Just validating my thoughts and feelings was such a relief I thought I was going crazy and your reassurance made me feel safe and grounded. That alone has been invaluable to me and I can never thank you enough!!*

*I am sad that you have to Move on but I know the next family you are assigned to will be very lucky to have you!!*

*Thank you so much Bev for all your support. You have been warm and empathetic and acted as a real advocate for our family.*

*The time you gave the boys was invaluable and you were always led by the children, showing real sensitivity to the family dynamics.*

*I appreciate the support with meetings and keeping us on track, inline with what was best for our family.*

*We will miss you and always appreciate the positive impact you have made*

- 2.12 The Council has now commissioned an external diagnostic to review the Early Help offer to ensure its preventative capacity is maximised. The diagnostic will help Children's Social Care understand the viability and steps to the creation of a Family HUB model for Early Help, a new approach to the front door and an improved offer through Emergency Duty Team (EDT). The diagnostic will have a specific focus on partnership working.
- 2.13 A review of EDT has been undertaken and the Adults EDT (Approved Mental Health Professional - AMHP) are now line managed through a senior manager in Adult Social Care. This will reduce the impact on the service from ASC as co-ordination of AMHP will no longer be required of the EDT Children's Manager. Officers are exploring using existing Council payment options for daytime staff to support EDT. This will provide a consistent service, is seen as a good model for retention of staff and as good practice in other councils. EDT will be reviewed as part of the

commissioned diagnostic inform a more intervention based model which will ensure a more responsive service for children and their families. This will ensure immediate safety for those at risk of significant harm whilst also intervening to support children to remain with their families where it has been assessed as safe to do so.

2.14 As members of the Committee are aware a new Quality Assurance Framework was put in place. Arrangements are in place for all managers and IROs to audit on a rota basis. Themed audits have included

- Supervision and oversight
- Role of males in the family
- Section 47 and strategy meetings
- CIN planning

Actions that support the findings of audits are in progress. These thematic audits are now supported by closing the loop audits undertaken by the Assistant Director, Principal Social Worker and Service Manager. There is a separate report elsewhere on the agenda to update Committee members on quality.

2.15 A key element of quality assurance is gathering feedback from children and their families. Feedback from children and families following audits of cared for children has included the following:

*'I have a good relationship with my SW we get on well, sometimes it takes her a long time to get back to me but she does listen to me.'* (feedback from cared for young person)

*'I think my feelings are taken into account within the plan. Initially I was having family time in a centre but asked to have it at home which has now happened.'* (Feedback from a dad of a cared for young person)

*Janet, the foster carer feels that <the child> is aware of why she is a cared for child in a child friendly way. She explained that <the child> has a voice and if she wants to speak with her social worker, he always ensures she*

2.16 Alongside the new Quality Assurance Framework a new supervision policy was introduced that will ensure that staff receive the appropriate support and training needed to deliver effective safeguarding services to families. However, the Children's Leadership team recognises that there is more work to do in this area,

strengthening supervision will have a significant impact on the quality of work with children and their families. The impact of training in supervision and management oversight is beginning to show in quality assurance. However, the team recognises that the frequency of supervision requires further attention, however there are areas of the service which has seen an increase in the level and quality of supervision such as in Locality Services.

- 2.17 Work has continued on rolling out the Family Valued Model with restorative practice and management oversight training being delivered. Further training will include assessment, planning and recording which will with the new Practice Standards and Quality Assurance Framework strengthen practice over time. The Leadership team are working hard to embed these mechanisms across Children's Services and to put in place processes that will provide assurance that practice standards are improving.
- 2.18 The revised Sefton Threshold document was launched in September 2022 following an extensive partnership consultation process. Over 200 people attended the launch event, chaired by both Children Services and representatives from the partnership. The document realigned specific safeguarding and support need criteria in line with the appropriate category of need. The new documents also bring a focus on both domestic abuse and child exploitation.

The revised document did coincide with an increase in the number of contacts into Children's Social Care which was an expectation due to the new safeguarding factors being included. Officers believe this, as well as the new screening tool for exploitation, has helped support an increase in identifying those at risk of exploitation much earlier. Officers continue to review the document and this will also form part of the upcoming diagnostic into the Integrated Front Door.

- 2.19 The Council has recently approved its Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and is finalising its Partnership Action Plan with partners through the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. To ensure there is alignment across objectives, the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board includes representatives from all statutory safeguarding partners. Additional support has been provided within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to assist with triaging referrals that contain domestic abuse. In addition, a Practice Improvement Team has been developed which supports Social Workers to understand the impact of domestic abuse on children and families they are working with and ensure that service pathways are in place and understood.

Sefton Safety Family Hub incorporates three temporary Social Workers who have been recruited who will focus primarily on improving practice with Domestic Abuse, creating multi-agency approaches and developing a new offer for families. They are being supported by an allocated Independent Domestic Violence Adviser and two workers from commissioned services (Sefton Women's And Children's Aid). As part of their role the Social Workers will deliver the Caring Dads perpetrator program which starts from mid-June. The team will partly operate from a family centre to deliver interventions with the intention of becoming a community hub of support and information for those families affected by domestic abuse.

A suite of supplementary training has been developed to support Mersey Care Children and Young People Sefton practitioners, including Child Exploitation, Domestic Abuse etc. All packages adopt a 'think family' approach. This is delivered by MerseyCare Foundation Trust safeguarding children specialist nurses. Health training evaluations are showing an improved knowledge base and increased level

of understanding in community health settings. Further analysis will be undertaken with GPs through the primary care network.

- 2.20 New family friendly conference facilities have been made available, and all conferences are now held in person. This has delivered a significant improvement in Child Protection conference timescales.
- 2.21 Increased robustness has been implemented around early de-planning and also those children subject to Child Protection planning and the Pre-Proceedings protocol. This has contributed to a stabilisation of the Child Protection cohort following a period of significant increase.
- 2.22 An action group, with a focus on improving assessments, has now concluded. A range of documents has been considered by the Senior Leadership Team and an implementation plan agreed. It is expected that the new approach will address the concerns raised in the most recent Monitoring Visit but it is too early to measure impact at this point.
- 2.23 New statutory visit templates have been devised which encourage practitioners to focus on the purpose of their visit and ensure the child's voice is captured. Quality assurance/auditing is identifying increasing examples of good quality, purposeful visits, although this is not yet universally embedded.
- 2.24 The development of the MySPACE team to deal with protection of children from exploitation. The team includes Council officers and professionals from health, police and other agencies. Named by cared for young people, the new team (Sefton Protection and Child Exploitation SPACE) provides an immediate response to these young people whilst delivering trauma informed approaches. The team is also Sefton's first child exploitation inter-agency service and families have benefited from the close working relationships between professionals. The development of the MySPACE service is linked to the development of our Family Hubs with the aim of a community-based Exploitation Hub being part of our new and improved offer for families.
- 2.25 Council teams and partners have been reminded of the importance of understanding the processes to be followed for children living in private fostering arrangements ([Sefton Local Safeguarding Children Partnership - Sefton SCP newsletters](#)). [The newsletter](#) has been disseminated for specific awareness raising in services where targeted needs identified - primary care (GP, dentistry & pharmacy). To further raise awareness of private fostering arrangements, Sefton SCP are delivering 30 minute virtual briefing sessions in April and September 2023. Arrangements are in place in the Safeguarding Partnership to monitor the impact of this.
- 2.26 A review of the capacity required to support the activity of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). This means that appropriate support is now in place to ensure that related work is progressed to required timescales and there is robust management oversight. Plus this additional capacity is enabling the LADO to deliver training to professionals.
- 2.27 The Children's Sufficiency Strategy is now complete subject to consultation with stakeholders. There are 3 meetings being scheduled to finalise the delivery plan and ensure actions are measurable and outcome focussed. There is a strong statement around unregulated provision.

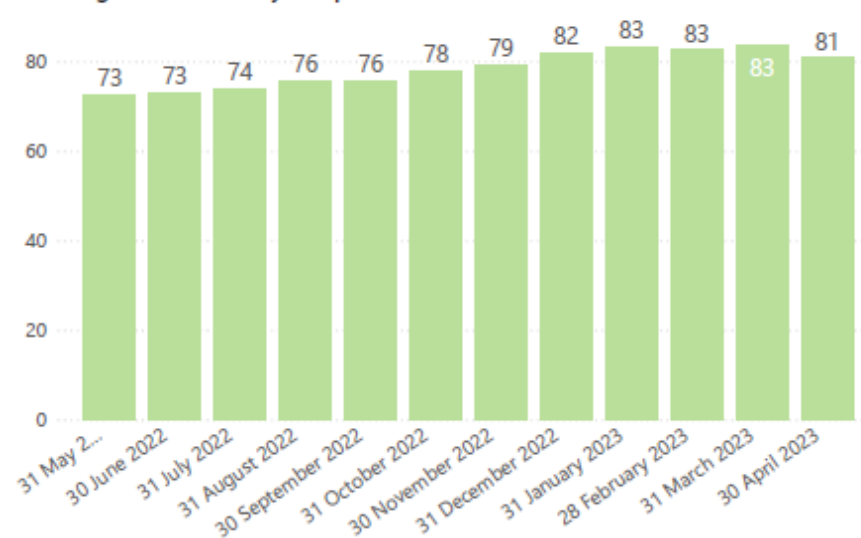
2.28 The implementation of Electronic Personal Education Plans (PEP). Training has been delivered with half termly online hubs (twilight sessions) are in place to provide ongoing training and support for designated teachers to ensure that practice is inclusive. Fortnightly drop in surgeries were put in place providing ongoing training and support to social work teams to ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEP) are an integral part of the care planning process.

This support has contributed to an improvement in the quality of PEPs, with 35% rated as green (a detailed PEP which identifies the child's need through both pupil voice and SMART targets in order to support educational/emotional outcomes. The plan for the child is very clear). However, the leadership team recognises that completion rates also need to improve.

2.29 Working with the lead nurse for Looked After Children to improve the access to dentistry the Merseyside pathway has been developed). Although Dentistry remains the responsibility of NHSe, the NHS Place Team in Sefton have started gap analysis in relation to primary care services for children including dentistry with a focus on access for Cared for Children. The Strand Health and Wellbeing development will have a focus on support to improve health of complex families and will have dentistry services included in the phasing of this for children.

Since the ILACS the % of dental checks has improved.

Meeting the Statutory Requirement for Dental Checks (%)



2.30 The Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board is chaired by the NHS Place Director – additional investment has gone into mental health provision and in May 2023 a Children and Young People Round Table Event was convened. Chief Executives and Chief Operating Officers from partnership health trusts attended along with Clinical Directors and have committed to a collaboration agreement which sets out their intention to children and young people in Sefton and the prioritising of all health referrals for children who are cared for and setting out their role as a corporate extended family.

2.31 A review of Business Support has laid the foundations for a Business Support team that supports the service to deliver good practice and monitor performance. The

capacity in this team will mean that Social Workers are spending more time with families and less time filling in forms.

- 2.32 Refreshing the [Finance policy](#) for care experienced young people which has improved the support for our young people leaving care and officers have worked hard with young people to improve the understanding and raise awareness of what they are entitled to.
- 2.33 Care experienced young people worked with the Communications Team to improve the Care Experienced offer [webpages](#) Our Space – Information for Cared For and Care Experienced young people (sefton.gov.uk) and this has been promoted to young people.
- 2.34 The implementation of [TriX](#), an online tool which stores policies and procedures. Staff have also received training in using this tool and there is now a greater understanding of policies and procedures.
- 2.35 The creation of an ICT group to agree and progress ICT development priorities. This established group is working well and has a clear roadmap for development. The ICT Group has reduced the need for all changes to go to the change group with minor changes being considered by the chair for approval immediate progression to the ICT Client Team. In terms of quick wins the group has progressed importing Wirral Liquid Logic forms which has reduced the need for new forms to be built by Sefton for example, standalone risk assessment and improved Independent Reviewing Officer/Child Protection mid-point check.
- 2.36 The Council has also changed its report template to ensure that when making key decisions the impact on children and young people is considered. This change will act a reminder to all officers and partners that when developing a report/strategy/action plan that they must consider the impact of the decision being recommended on children and young people. In addition to this the Council has reminded the workforce and partners of the importance of making use of the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) to inform decisions. In turn partners have provided updated contact information so that they can support the refresh of the various chapters of the JSNA at the appropriate time.
- 2.37 The Council is working hard to ensure that children and young people's voice, engagement and co-production with families is a central tenet of Council and partnership strategies. These steps have included a Council motion in January 2023 when the Council voted to make 'care experienced' a protected characteristic, putting it on equal footing with race and gender when it comes to fighting discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity for all.

In recognising 'care experienced' as a protected characteristic, the Council will actively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people in the same way they would ensure voices across the spectrum of age, gender, race and disability are heard. It will ensure that all decisions the Council make, the policies they set and the services they commission always consider the specific needs of care experienced young people and the impact on them.

At the same Council meeting revised its Consultation and Engagement Framework and affirmed the Council's commitment to ensuring that children and young people's voice, engagement and co-production with families is a central tenet of local authority and partnership strategies be re-affirmed. Following that meeting the



Council workforce and partners have been reminded to make use of the [Youth Voice Toolkit](#).

At April 2023 Council members considered the first [Listening to the Voices of Children and Young People](#) report and again reaffirmed its commitment to listening to the voices of children, young people and their families in the development of Council and partnership strategies; and invited members of SYMBOL be invited to attend and speak at a future Council meeting on a subject that is important to them.

- 2.38 The LGA has been commissioned to deliver additional training to elected members to ensure they know how to effectively discharge their duties, are committed Corporate Parents and that Scrutiny arrangements for Children's Services are robust and effective.
- 2.39 The Corporate Parenting Board now has representatives from across the political spectrum to ensure that responsibilities are everyone's business and consistency in compliance with statutory corporate parenting responsibilities and local standards as set out in the pledge. This is contributing to the embedding of corporate responsibility across the Council and partners to safeguard children and meet the needs of children in care and care leavers.
- 2.40 Work has continued to develop local residential care provision and ensure sufficient investment to support this and the Council has commissioned external support to support this work.
- 2.41 Officers have now established and mobilised a local framework of residential providers and taken steps to establish and build a relationship based commissioning model, this means face to face regular engagement with providers to understand levels of demand, ability to meet the needs of local children and any supported need to this, be practicalities or bringing in wrap around support from partners to maintain placements once made.
- 2.42 Work is underway to deliver a wider market engagement strategy in addition to those providers on our local framework and Strategic commissioning teams continue to work on a regional and local footprint to understand best practice and innovation and ensure this contribute to improvements in Sefton. Work on details demand and capacity modelling as part of our sufficiency planning continuous and a new phase of sufficiency planning that reflects tangible outcomes is being developed with key stakeholders.

### **3.1 Improvement Plan Priorities for the Next Quarter**

- 3.1 The Council has put in place the Improvement Team to support the delivery of change required and respond to the Commissioner's recommendations. The team will focus on key priorities such as recruitment

The Council will continue to focus on improving practice and a number of key priorities;

- Stabilising the workforce
- Ensuring the right children are receiving the right at the right time
- Engaging the workforce and partners in the delivery of the required change.

3.2 It is recognised that evidence to improve practice and other areas to solidify the above measures requires more hard work, drive, commitment, positivity and energy but the recent stabilisation of Social Workers in practice, the recent audits and feedback from our workforce has provided a more positive outlook and officers have more confidence in knowing our strengths and weaknesses and the improvements required to improve outcomes for children, young people and families and are determined to deliver this transformation.