

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Mhairi Doyle	Children's Social Care	25 May 2023

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

- We are starting to see some stabilisation in our permanent workforce with a slight increase of full time equivalent social workers.
- 23 International social workers have been recruited, with 9 due to start next month. The rest of the social workers appointed, will arrive following appropriate DBS checks and visa applications.
- Recent audit activity is showing an improvement in the number of cases which are graded 'Requires Improvement' or 'Good'. An Increasing number of good practice examples are being identified.
- We are in the process of developing an action plan following the results of our 'annual Survey' for cared for children and care experienced.
- Work is underway to plan events over the summer, care leavers week and Christmas for our cared for children and care experienced.
- MYSPACE, a team which focuses on the support for children at risk of exploitation and missing has been launched on the 24th May.
- Changes have been made to the fostering financial policy meaning that all carers are paid 100% of the fee for a second or subsequent child placed. This will support with our sufficiency and increasing the number of available foster homes for children.
- We are preparing for the next Ofsted monitoring visit and developed an action plan which has been shared with all staff. We meet weekly to track the progress.

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE (YJS)

Performance

The current performance against the key performance indicators (KPI's) remains stable. There was a slight increase in First Time Entrants (FTE) for the time period Oct 2020-21 compared to 2021-22 which aligns with a general increase across Merseyside. Local tracking for FTE has shown a very slight increase in quarter four 2022-23. Reoffending data tends to be historic due to the tracking processes, there was a significant reduction of 15% between years 2019-20 and 2020-21, however, this was during the time of Covid related lockdown and future tracking may show an increase. Sefton's custody rates have increased with one child sentenced and another on remand for a serious offence.

From August 2023, the performance data will include the ten new KPI's which will provide a richer picture of how the Youth Justice Service and partners support children who access our service.

Focus on Risk of Serious Harm and Violence

At the Youth Justice Partnership Board 31st January, we delivered a case study relating to children in the cohort who were at high / very high risk of serious harm to others and those who had committed violent offences. The Partnership has subsequently met to discuss the findings in greater depth to determine what steps could be taken to address the concerns raised. The discussion centred on areas that could be optimised in the short term such as Probation referring younger siblings or children of their clients for support through Early Help. The partners raised some system issues such as the wider prevention and diversion offer for children to support them from an early stage. In addition, some broad issues around predictive analysis and shared data systems were discussed, and these were viewed as longer term ambitions.

The case studies will be presented to the Operational Partnership Group to obtain the practitioners perspective. A report will then be submitted via the Partnership Chair to take to the Safeguarding Children's Partnership with some questions to consider in addressing the issues raised.

Youth Justice Board Oversight Framework

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) have introduced a new oversight framework to improve performance and ensure partners are aligned to deliver effective outcomes for children, identify good practice and ensure that youth justice services comply with grant conditions. The YJB have developed a Performance Oversight Board which will report to the Ministry of Justice. Each Youth Justice Service (YJS) will be allocated a Performance Lead and an assessment will take place for each YJS to determine where they are placed within four performance quadrants.

The performance quadrants are as follows:

1. Strong Performance -YJS's with HMIP rating of Good or Outstanding.
2. Satisfactory Performance - this is the default rating with no further detail provided.
3. Improvement Needed - YJS's with HMIP rating of Requires Improvement, some weaknesses in Annual Plan and possibly a dip in performance.
4. Poor Performance - YJS with HMIP rating of Inadequate and do not comply with YJB grant conditions.

The main areas of focus are performance against the Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System, compliance with grant conditions, leadership, local priorities and continuous improvement. Performance will be monitored quarterly and for YJS's that cause concern, these will be monitored more frequently and may receive additional support. All YJS's will be monitored through an action plan and for those in quadrants 3 or 4, they will submit their action plan to the YJB.

These arrangements will commence over the course of the next few weeks with the first YJB visit scheduled for end May. The YJ Partnership Board chair has been informed and the Board will be invited to a development session in the near future to understand the level of scrutiny, as all statutory partners are required to meet the YJB expectation.

Prevention Projects

The Turnaround and Community Youth Connector projects are mobilised and each team are working with children and making some strong connections with community providers.

Turnaround works with children who are essentially 'pre- youth justice', however, the vulnerabilities and risk that the children in this cohort present are as equally concerning as those in the statutory cohort. We are engaging with external providers to deliver diversionary and educational activities and have already received some excellent feedback from children and families.

The Community Youth Connectors are working with approximately forty children (girls) alongside their schools in the north and south of the borough. The project will work with children who present low level emotional wellbeing concerns and are at risk of offending and exploitation. Children can access direct work with the Connectors and also engage in group work. The children and families will be connected to community provision to access ongoing support. Schools are very keen to access support and the YJS is considering further bids to the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership to extend the reach of the offer.