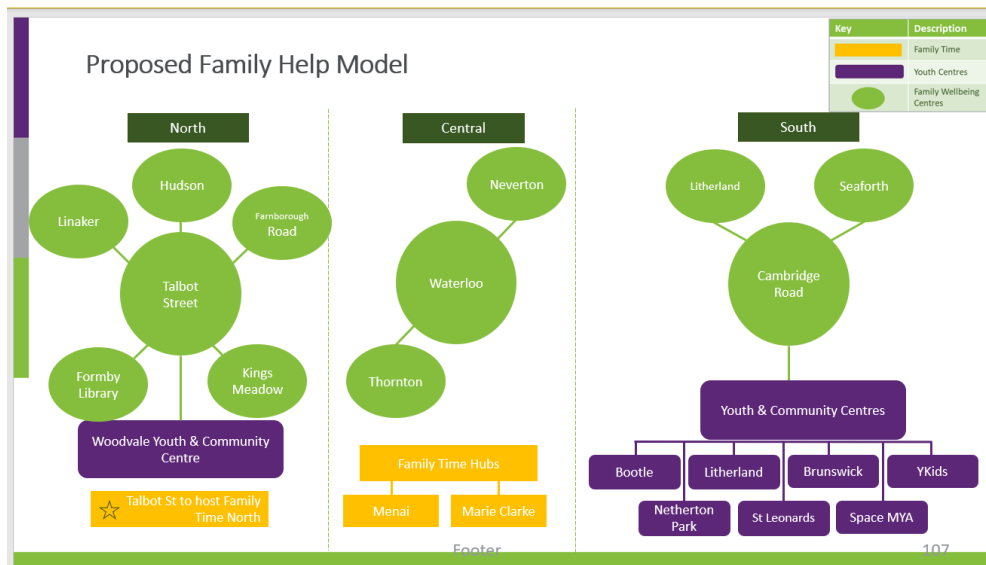


CABINET MEMBER UPDATE		
Overview and Scrutiny (Children’s Services and Safeguarding)		
Councillor	Portfolio	Date
Mhairi Doyle	Cabinet Member Children’s Services	30 th January 2024

Children’s Social Care
Early Help

We are making steady progress in developing our new Early Help offer, based around Family Hubs, these will be in three localities and will be virtual Hubs incorporating our key stakeholders. We are developing our targeted family support to build on our current offer this will ensure that families are able to receive help when they need it without having to be



involved with statutory services. This includes services for adolescents.

Monitoring Visit

The letter was published on 12th January and gives a review of the monitoring visit of vulnerable children which took place in November 2023. The letter highlights that “some steady progress” is taking place for specific groups but that this progress comes from a “significant low base”. Improvement in these circumstances highlights the hard work and commitment of these specific workers and the services which support their improvement. The letter highlighted that more work is still necessary to bring consistency, specifically in the development of plans for children and families.

The letter highlighted that pace is still a problem in areas of work involving other services such as transitions to adults and housing for 16–17-year-olds. There is some positivity in the letter with recognition that some areas of practice are starting to improve such as assessments and purposeful visits. However, the service fully recognises that this is still not a service that is good enough and that further work at pace is required. We are, however, as always thankful, to frontline staff who evidenced their commitment and engagement to Sefton and with the current improvement plan.

We have a post Ofsted action plan in place to ensure that we have already taken immediate steps to improve services. We have a dedicated Social Worker, Team Manager and IRO who will hold Private Fostering children and ensure close monitoring and oversight. We have a plan to build on our progress for children with complex health needs.

Integrated Front Door

We are working with Peopletoo and Leeds Family Valued, to improve our services for families and to support professionals and partners in accessing the right help for families where there are safeguarding concerns. This involves changing our 'front door' to a 'conversation model', people will be able to have a structured conversation with a social worker. We are now mapping out the implementation plan with a plan to go live this spring. Peopletoo, and Leeds are supporting this change until the end of March 2004.

Court Revocation Team

The revocation team was doubled in size in October and will shortly be increased to 8 full time social workers. The team are focusing specifically on the court applications for discharge and Special Guardianship applications to take children out of care. For those children who are remain with their Foster carers often relatives who were approved as Foster carers many years ago the 'no detriment' policy is supporting the rise in applications. All but two of the social workers are just focusing on the court process and the original two will by the beginning of March have moved all their work to dedicate to court work too.

- Currently there are 16 applications for discharge before the court with court dates between January to March.
- There are a further 23 applications and statements complete and due for court filing by mid-January.
- There are a further 32 that are in train due late February early March.
- A further 35 are in planning and there is potential for at least another 20.
- There are a total of 126 with a plan for Discharge/Discharge SGO. There are potentially more to identify too.

Help & Protection

Two Agency Court Teams have finished working with Sefton, we have closely worked with the teams to ensure that the impact for families is minimised. This means that the service has tapered to ensure that Social Workers are able to complete work within the Courts that is coming to an end.

A meeting has been held with Agency Staff to discuss the opportunity to join Sefton children's social care on a permanent basis.

Youth Justice Service Performance

Performance remains relatively stable with a slight increase in statutory court orders and an increase in first time entrants, predominantly for violence offences. There are some concerns relating to girls committing violence which will remain a focus for the Community Youth Connectors project which supports girls within school settings.

YJS has completed the first return to the Youth Justice Board against the new Key Performance Indicators. Much of this is data collection however it did focus attention on education in the context of exclusions and persistent and severe absence. YJS with Education colleagues were already tracking children who had concerning school attendance and consult with Career Connect, Virtual School, SEND and Health colleagues to review school offers and post 16 provision for all children with YJS.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Serious Youth Violence (SYV)

A series of JTAI's will be undertaken from October 23 to assess the effectiveness of local multi- agency responses to serious youth violence (SYV). This JTAI relates to violent crime committed by or affecting children outside of the home including homicide, knife and gun crime. Inspector will assess the effectiveness of Community Safety Partnerships, Violence Reduction Partnerships and local safeguarding arrangements.

New HMIP Inspection Framework

The current cycle of HMIP inspections will extend through to October 2024. To align with the new cycle, a new framework has been issued in draft and is subject to a short period of consultation. There are some changes to the inspection framework which focuses more on the quality of practice rather than process. There is also a greater emphasis on out of court work due to the increase in numbers and level of complexity in the cohort in children.

Prevention

The Turnaround and Community Youth Connectors (CYC) projects are producing some great outcomes and have received excellent feedback from children and parents. We rely on Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership funding for the CYC project which is only funded until end March 24. A funding bid was submitted in September however we are yet to hear whether this was successful despite positive feedback. We will continue to seek the funding and report on progress.

Cared for Children and Care Experienced Sufficiency

The Sefton framework which commenced in February 2023, has now reopened for tender, this was a 12 monthly commitment to offer the opportunity for new providers to join. Following positive feedback from providers the Executive Commissioning Group gave approval for a 2023 tender round to commence. This has now closed on the 8th of Dec with a good response. The Evaluation will commence between the 15th Dec 2023 – 22nd January 2024 moderation will be completed by mid-February with award by End of March 2024.

Quality Assurance of Commissioned Placements

Quality Assurance of all unregistered Provision is still ongoing and more post 16 provision now getting registration. It should be noted that we now have 1 unregulated placement only with plans for a permanent placement for this young person.

We now have a completed contracts register for all commissioned services which allows us to be reassured on compliance and plan work programmes in more detail.

Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance Practice

Acting upon feedback from monitoring visits as well as evidence from our own quality assurance processes, the Safeguarding unit have strengthened the focus upon identifying what permanence looks like for all children open to intervention. This approach has been set out to in the Safeguarding Unit 'Permanence Charter' which was delivered to all staff at November's Quarterly Practice Workshop. This approach is underpinned by a new format for Quality Assurance which focuses the review of the case on the success achieved in removing barriers to permanence.

The Project to provide independent Oversight to 'Child in Need' plans through the safeguarding unit has now been up and running for six months. To date over 230 Children's plans have had the benefit of Oversight and Quality Assurance by a designated Child in Need Reviewing Officer (CIRO). Reviews of this provision show evidence of improved quality of plans and oversight as well as positive feedback from families.

Number of children subject to child protection planning continues to decrease to a rate approaching the regional norm, a review of this cohort also shows decreased numbers of long term (plus 2 years) plans as well as a decrease in the number of children who find themselves the subject of Child Protection Planning for a second or subsequent time.

The focus of practice improvement over the next three months will be plans and we have created a bespoke training, coaching and quality assurance package which will launch in late Jan / early February.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance activity continues to show improved practice in a number of areas, most notably 'relationship-based practice' and the quality of social work visits. Despite improvements, our plans for children across all forms of intervention need to be strengthened, and the focus of improvement activity over the next quarter will be solely on the quality of plans and planning, with a service wide development offer which will also include multi-agency partners.