



FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Thursday, 20 October 2022 at 5.30 pm in the Bridges Room - Civic Centre

From the Chief Executive, Sheena Ramsey

Item	Business
1	Apologies for absence
2	Minutes of last meeting (Pages 3 - 10) The Committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on 8 September 2022
3	Youth Justice - Speech Language and Communication Needs (Pages 11 - 16) Report of the Strategic Director, Children's Social Care and Lifelong Learning
4	Demand Pressures, Children in Care and Child Protection (Pages 17 - 24) Report of the Deputy Strategic Director, Children Social Care and Early Help
5	Mockingbird Programme - Progress Update (Pages 25 - 28) Report of Strategic Director, Children's Social Care and Lifelong Learning
6	Affordability of School Uniforms Verbal Update
7	Work Programme (Pages 29 - 32) Joint Report of the Chief Executive and Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

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GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 8 September 2022

PRESENT: Councillor M Hall (Chair)
Councillor(s): H Kelly, D Bradford, L Caffrey, P Craig,
K McCartney, E McMaster, J Mohammed, L Moir, A Ord and
D Robson

CO-OPTED MEMBERS Rachel Walton

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): D Burnett, B Clelland, C Davison and M Ord
Co-opted Member(s): Ayodele Akin

F50 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

F51 CAMHS AND IMPACT OF COVID - UPDATE

The Committee received a report in relation to the impact if the Covid 19 pandemic on the mental health of children and young people in Gateshead and the services supporting them.

The impact of Covid 19 on the mental health of children and young people has been widely reported.

Public Health England recognised the need and issued the guidance on supporting children and young people with their mental health and wellbeing. The guidance offered advice on:

- Ways to get urgent help for mental health and support
- How CYP might cope with stress during the pandemic
- How CYP might manage with physical health issues
- How CYP who care for others might be supported
- Strategies to address bullying
- Support for CYP experiencing grief or bereavement

Referrals into Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) during the first wave of the pandemic dropped, this was attributed to the loss of the school structure (education being a key referrer for children and young people) and concerns about attendance at GP or other appointments during lockdown.

However, many young people were clearly struggling with the changes to their routines, the fear of the unknown, worries about loved ones, the loss of social contact with peers and increased pressure on families who were under financial pressure and forced to be together for long periods of time. Sadly there was a marked increase in domestic violence and many young people were exposed to risk which they may not otherwise have faced had they been at school or able to socialise.

As children returned to school and more readily started to access primary care support, the referral rate to all pathways in the CYPS services increased and has continued to do so exponentially.

Initially all young people, including those waiting for services were contacted and risk assessed to monitor their wellbeing. Face to face contact with appropriate PPE was maintained for those deemed to be at highest risk.

Young people were helped to understand and strengthen their internal resilience, learn helpful coping strategies, relaxation techniques and mindfulness. Parents were encouraged to promote confidence and support their children by understanding the importance of communication, empathy and the need for their children to feel safe and supported.

There has been a noticeable decrease in overall staff resilience in the service through the pandemic. The CYPS service has experienced high levels of staff sickness (made of both covid and non-covid related sickness) and recruitment and retention of staff have become a significant challenge.

The average number of referrals accepted over the past six weeks are 25 per week with the rate showing a continued increase. Under a waiting list initiative the Trust are transferring 25 cases per month to Toby Henderson Trust. A total of 292 cases have been transferred to Psychiatry UK between April 2022 and July 2022 with the total number being 480 within the 22/23 financial year.

There are lots of children with Autism/ADHD and a lot of children being referred for assessment, work is ongoing to look at how children are supported when waiting for a diagnosis and work is ongoing with schools and families.

Support is being requested from colleagues in the voluntary sector to assist in making an impact on waiting lists.

It was queried as to how we can all work better together. It was noted that capacity issues have been described but it feels like we aren't getting the bigger picture in how CAMHS has the ability to deal with the issues.

It was noted that CNTW can't do this on the own and by working together with education and both primary and secondary care and picking up children at the earliest possible juncture. There is a question of what we can do at every level and integrating into the community, and if we don't line up all the dots can we deal with this on our own, the answer is no.

It was noted that the report gives us an insight into the fact that we are dealing with

complex problems. This Committee's role is to scrutinise services provided so without knowing what the demand is its difficult to scrutinise how well the demand is being met.

It feels that there are some missing bits to the puzzle. The Health and Wellbeing Board at its December meeting will be having a focus on mental health, we will have a candid discussion about services and how they are meeting needs.

It would be good when the update is provided next year that we can see a baseline and where we are going.

It was queried what had been the impact of Covid on school attendance and what specifically has been put in place to capture the needs of children. It was noted that unless a child has been referred to the service by a professional or school the service wouldn't be aware of the numbers.

If a children is not brought to an appointment there would be a safeguarding concern raised, there would be a red flag if they were out of school and known to the service.

The service is linking in with schools and has a designated clinical officer who is new to post.

It was noted that a query had been raised about the current contract and if the need is higher doe the contract meet the need.

It was noted that it would be helpful to have a couple of case studies to show the pathways, length of time someone is waiting, details of recruitment and retention.

RESOLVED (i) That the information presented in the report be noted.
(ii) That further information be brought to the Committee in April 2023 as requested.

F52 OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee were provided with an update in relation to areas identified for improvement from inspection activity by Ofsted. The improvements being worked upon are supporting our aim to become an outstanding children services provider.

During a short inspection in 2019, the service was judged good and then in a focussed visit in September 2021 the report was that we were continuing to provide a good service that had improved. The findings of the inspections were overwhelmingly positive but both identified a small number of areas for improvement.

An action plan has been developed which identifies 6 key areas of improvement.

- Improve the quality and focus of written plans to ensure they are specific and targeted to meet the needs of individual children
- Secure access to services for those children in care who live out of the borough
- Improve the quality and impact of supervision and contingency planning for

- children in need (ensure consistency for all children)
- Ensure routine inclusion of children and their families' views in audits
- Development of contextual safeguarding arrangements
- Further development of domestic abuse provision

For each of the 6 areas of improvement in the action plan, broad improvement themed actions have been identified which are supported by detailed operational activities designed to achieve the themed action. A lead officer has been identified for each themed action.

The service has already started to implement actions from the plan. The service is seeking to complete the actions over the next 6 months with good progress already being made over the previous 6 months. It was noted that there were some really good actions and it was queried how realistic the targets were for recruitment of foster carers were they too ambitious. It was noted that they were ambitious but that we need to be ambitious as some of the carers we currently have are becoming staying put carers. We are seeing new carers coming through but we don't currently have any vacancies with carers.

It was queried if it would be possible to have the results shared on the audits that children and families are involved in. It was noted that it would be possible to provide these anonymously.

It was queried how children who are living in a household where there is domestic abuse are being identified. It was noted that referrals com in through from members of the public, teachers, health professionals, referrals through the front door.

It was queried whether it would be possible to have a glossary of terms or an easier to understand version of the plan.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) that the information contained within the report and plan be noted.
 - (ii) that the request for information and comments be noted.
 - (iii) That a progress report will be brought back to Committee in 6 months

F53 ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS - CHILDREN

The Committee were presented with a report on complaints, compliments and Representations for the period April 2021 to March 2022.

The Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 Requires that Councils with Social Services responsibilities produce an Annual Report of their Statutory Children's Services Complaints Procedure.

The Annual Report is specifically about Children Act 1989 Statutory Complaints about Children's Social Care Services with information on complaint related queries and compliments that are received about staff or services.

The procedure has three stages

Stage 1 – Local Resolution

Stage 2 – Investigation

Stage 3 – Independent Review

In 2021/22 the number of complaints and representations dealt with was as follows:

- The number of formal contacts received, including compliments, about Children's Services decreased by 13.2% (187) compared with the number of contacts received during 2020/21, (215).
- The number of contacts raising dissatisfaction increased by 11% (79 to 88).
- This is the same level of dissatisfaction received during 2019/20.
- Children's Services received 11 Stage 1 complaints during 2021/22. This is almost a 35% decrease on Stage 1 complaints received during 2020/21, (17).
- The number of complaint related queries (low level issues not requiring a written response) increased by 3% compared to those received during 2020/21 (26 from 27).
- 59% (16) of complaint related queries were regarding the quality of services provided.
- All complaint related queries received about Children's Social Care were dealt with directly by either the team manager of the service complained about or by the Complaints Section after prior discussion with the worker concerned.
- There were no complaints registered at Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure during 2021/22.
- However, there were three Stage 3 Review Panels held during this time. Two of the Panels held were in respect of the same complaint. The first Panel was stood down due to new information submitted by the Service.
- During 2021/22, 53% (99) of all Children's Services contacts were compliments.

The following key points were highlighted to the Committee

- Complaints brought by relatives of children receiving a service accounted for 91% (10) of all complaint referrals.
- One complaint was raised directly by a cared for young person. This complaint was regarding the actions of staff in a commissioned residential facility. This complaint was partially upheld after investigation.
- Children and young people receiving a service have recourse to the Council's Children's Rights Officer. The Children's Rights Officer works closely with those who raise concerns and, in most cases, can resolve these successfully.
- 36% (4) of all complaints received were in respect of services provided by the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams. However, it should be noted that most children receiving a service are allocated a social worker from the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams.

- 27% (3) of complaints were regarding the services provided by the Assessment and Intervention Team.
- The key theme identified from complaints about the Assessment and Intervention Service were disputes to information within assessments or the assessment process.
- 27% (3) of complaints received were regarding services provided by the Cared For Children Team. This is at the same level as the number of complaints received about the team in 2020/21, (3).

Some examples of Service Improvements identified during 2021/22 were also presented to the Committee.

- As a result of a Statutory complaint, where it was alleged that the social worker failed to recognise a child's religious and cultural upbringing, it was arranged that specific training in respect of religious awareness for social workers will be included in the portfolio option for staff and will be a regular occurrence.
- It was also recommended that all staff across Children's Services are mindful of any cultural and religious differences across the communities in Gateshead and that these are considered during social work involvement with BAME families. This issue was also addressed by the Local Authority carrying out mandatory Equality and Diversity for all Local Authority staff.
- After a Data complaint about the presentation of personal records following a Subject Access Request, (SAR), the Service responsible for administering the requests carried out a review of the process. All current applications were subsequently reviewed to ensure that they were being dealt with efficiently and appropriately. In addition to this SAR Officers are now able to dedicate sufficient time to deal with each request in line with service requirements.
- Following a complaint where the parent of a child receiving a service complained about the lack of support during the Covid19 lockdown period, it was found that the family's self isolation period along with sickness within the Social Work Team did slightly impact on support provided. An apology was given at the time and was also reiterated within the response letter. The complainant was satisfied with the service support following the ceasing of the Covid-19 restrictions.
- After a LG&SCO investigation into a complaint about the removal of a cared for child from the foster placement along with concerns about the quality of the LADO process the Ombudsman did identify recommendations which were shared with the Council. The Council accepted the recommendations and implemented the changes required.

- After a complaint about delays in receiving Child Protection Review Reports, the worker was instructed to ensure all future reports are shared in line with timescales. This will then provide an opportunity to consider the content of the reports and to allow the family member to raise any concerns or queries before the Review Conference take place.

It is proposed that for 2022/23 officers and senior managers continue to meet on a regular basis to consider what action needs to be taken to make sure that:

- Complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity
- The number of complaints being investigated and resolved within the statutory timescales is improved
- The number of complaints progressing to Stage 2 and Stage 3 remains low
- Any identified improvements to services are implemented where appropriate and monitored to ensure compliance by teams across Children's Services

Work will continue to ensure that staff members who received compliments continue to have the details passed on so that they or their team received the recognition.

The Committee felt that the report was presented with enthusiasm and were struck by the resources and time which is put into an investigation. They also felt that the self reflective learning was a positive and that everyone is treated in the same way.

It was queried what the position was with regards to the equalities monitoring. It was noted that it is sometimes difficult to have customers complete the monitoring and sometimes officers can pull out the information, but this is not always possible. A copy of the monitoring form to be sent to the Committee for information.

It was noted that it was good to see improvements are made following the investigation of complaints.

RESOLVED - (i) that the comments of the Committee be noted.
(ii) that the Committee are satisfied with the performance of Children's Service in responding to complaints and that this results in continuous service improvement.

F54 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee were presented with the work programme report and the minor amendments were highlighted, the two SEND reports are to be linked and the Early Help Demand pressures moved to October meeting.

It was noted that there is still the Edberts House update on the work they are doing around Adverse Childhood Experiences.

It was requested that the updated training for Corporate Parenting be done in person.

It was queried whether it would be possible to have an update on the music service and what / how people in the community are getting involved in music.

It was requested that there be a review of people's experiences with energy costs and cost of living in general in 2023.

RESOLVED - (i) that the provisional work programme for 2022/23 be noted.
(ii) that further reports on the work programme with be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

TITLE OF REPORT:	Youth Justice Service – Speech, Language and Communication Needs
REPORT OF:	Strategic Director, Children’s Social Care & Lifelong Learning

Summary

To provide an update on the impact of Speech, Language and Communication Needs for young people involved with Gateshead Youth Justice Service.

1.Introduction

All young people involved with Gateshead Youth Justice Service undergo a robust assessment of need.

The assessment considers the young person’s individual needs, this includes Speech Language and Communication. This report considers the high levels of SLCN in young people open to Youth Justice Services and how this is being addressed in Gateshead.

2.Background / Context

There is not a common definition for Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). SLCN can be a ‘hidden disability’ because it is often not visible or obvious and young people can become adept at hiding the true nature of their difficulties. Young people with SLCN can often come across as “intelligent and articulate”, which can make needs harder to identify.

The bullet points below highlight the different elements of speech language and communication.

Speech refers to:

- Saying sounds accurately and in the right places in words
- The sounds people make to communicate words
- Speaking fluently, without hesitating, or prolonging and repeating words
- Speaking with expression with a clear voice, using pitch, volume and intonation to support meaning

Language refers to:

- Speaking and understanding
- Using words to build up sentences, sentences to build up conversation and longer stretches of broken language
- Understanding and making sense of what people say

Communication refers to:

- How we interact with others
- Language is used to represent concepts and thoughts
- Using language in different ways to question, clarify, describe
- Non-verbal rules of communication, good listening, looking at people

3. What is the impact of speech, language and communication difficulties?

Young people with SLCN have difficulty communicating with others. This may be because they cannot say what they want to, have difficulty in understanding what is being said to them or do not understand the social rules of communication. By the time young people enter the youth justice system, many of those with SLCN will have developed coping strategies to mask the impact of the SLCN. This might include:

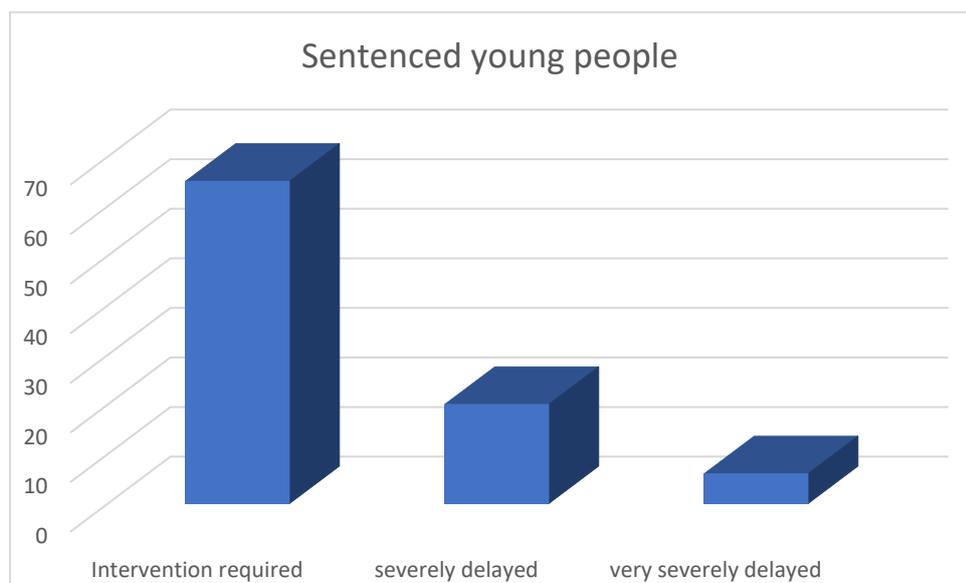
- having a good level of surface conversation which they cannot maintain when conversations develop
- being very quiet and seemingly compliant
- using aggression to deflect hard conversations/to avoid having to admit that they don't understand
- being disruptive and having difficulty engaging
- indicating they understand, when they do not
- saying they understand when they do not

The 2015 Communication Trust report 'Doing Justice to Speech Language and Communication' found young people with SLCN who enter the criminal justice system may not understand their sentence and its requirements. The Youth Justice system uses technical language and many young people do not understand commonly used words such as breach, condition and remorse. Many young people struggle with the concept of time, which has an implication if they fail to attend appointments and breach their sentence. Over 60% of young people who are accessing youth justice services present with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) which are largely unrecognised. The research shows that people with SLCN are overrepresented in the justice system and if these problems are not addressed early on then these will significantly impact upon their functioning.

AssetPlus is the Youth Justice Boards assessment tool which is used for all young people subject to a court order, it incorporates elements of the The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists SLCN screening tool with additional neuro-disability

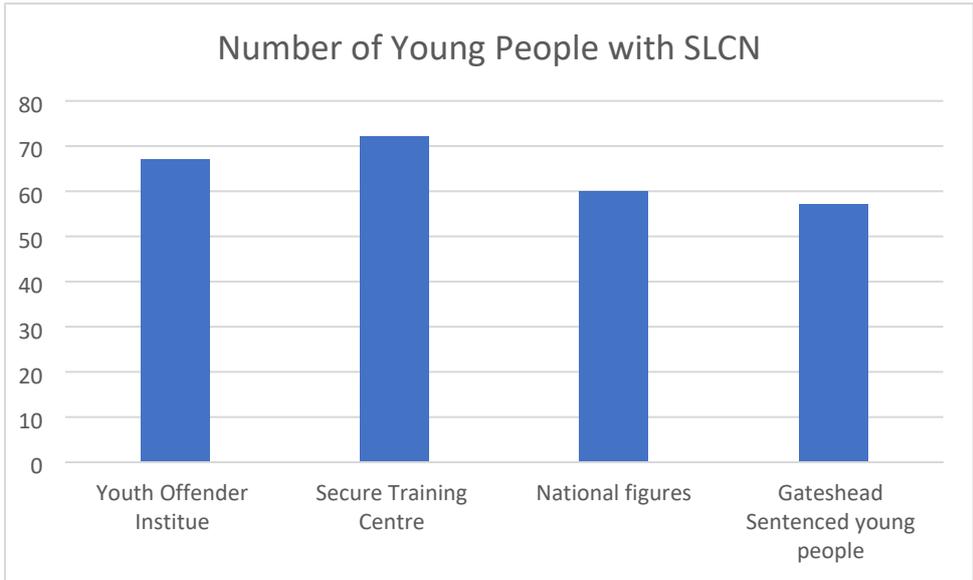
questions. Clear Cut Communications is a organisation in Durham that specialises in SLCN for young people in the Criminal Justice System, they have produced a AssetPlus Screening Support Pack. Gateshead Youth Justice Service has worked with this screening tool for a number of years and has recommissioned the training for new staff and as a refresher for other staff. The screening support pack is an interactive resource that has the screening questions rewritten into questions which the young person can understand. The screening tool can be completed in relation to all young people and can be conducted by practitioners or non-specialist health staff. Judgements are made based on observations of the young person and information provided by primary carers or teachers. Following the screen, young people may need to be referred onto speech and language therapy for a full assessment to determine the extent of their needs.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists worked with a Youth Offending Service and they screened all young people subject to the most intensive community sentence. They found 65% of the young people required speech and language therapy intervention. A significant number (20%) scored at the 'severely delayed' level on standardised assessment and 6% as 'very severely delayed'. (Gregory, Bryan, 2009).

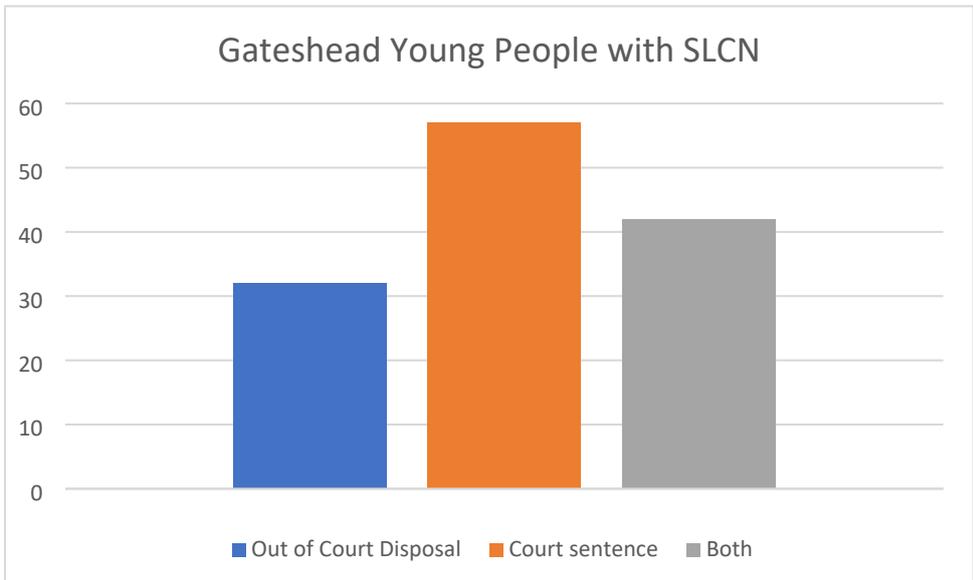


A study of young people in a Secure Training Centre were screened for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Only two of the participants had previously been identified with SLCN. Of those screened 72% were found to require any additional support and 14.4% were identified for 1:1 speech and language therapy intervention. (Bryan, Garvani, Gregory, & Kilner, 2015)

A further research project at a Young Offender Institution found 67% could be classified as having a developmental language disorder. (Turner, 2017)



In the current cohort of young people open to Gateshead Youth Justice Service 42% had been identified as having a Speech, Language or Communication difficulty. There are two routes into the Youth Justice Service, the first is via police for an Out of Court Disposal and the second through being sentenced at court. Young people in the Out of Court Disposal cohort tend to be young people who have committed less serious offences and are not prolific offenders. Young people sentenced through the court tend to be young people who are already been dealt with by an Out of Court disposal but who have continued to offend or have committed offences that are so serious they cannot be dealt with in an alternative way. In the Out of Court disposal cohort 32% of young people had a SLCN and in the cohort of young people who received a court order 57% of young people had an identified SLCN need.



4. Working with young people with SLCN

It is essential that young people subject to statutory interventions fully understand the requirements and expectation placed upon them. Young people are required to provide information about their offending behaviour and peer and family relationships. Identifying where a young person has SLCN may increase the likelihood of a young person successfully completing requirements placed on them. The Bercow report described difficulties in responding to interventions as being “sufficient to affect their ability to communicate with staff on a day-to-day basis, to prevent them from benefiting from verbally mediated interventions such as education and offender behaviour work and, if not addressed, to contribute to reoffending” (Bercow, 2008:41). The report ‘Children and Young People in Breach’ (Hart, 2010) suggests there is evidence that children and young people who have been subject to enforcement procedures may have struggled to comply because of a lack of comprehension about expectations.

Youth Justice Case Managers ensure the language used with young people at all times is appropriate to their need and development, particular attention should be given to the stages where key information is exchanged:

- at the police station (if undertaking an appropriate adult role)
- while completing an assessment of need, risk or vulnerability
- during the court process
- while explaining the requirements or conditions of an intervention
- when considering issues of non-compliance

The Communication Trust guide ‘Sentence Trouble’ (Communication Trust, 2009) suggests that workers delivering youth justice services can positively interact with a young person with speech and language difficulties by:

- giving the young person extra time to listen to and understand what is being said
- asking what would assist them in promoting their understanding
- emphasising specific words that they should focus on
- ensuring that the young person gives their own explanation of what has been said to verify whether they fully understand what is expected from them
- giving the young person reminders of any future appointments
- flagging anything the young person has said which the staff member does not understand
- providing the young person with a brief overview before providing them with a more in-depth explanation
- providing them with a wide variety of activities to encourage their engagement
- providing them with positive encouragement and feedback
- simplifying written materials using clear writing and understandable terminology

- using short sentences with appropriate pauses to allow them to process new information
- using uncomplicated language that the young person is familiar with
- using visual tools to encourage their understanding

5. Gateshead Youth Justice Service – Summary

Gateshead Youth Justice Service provides a Court Officer to all Magistrate and Crown Court hearings. In line with the Youth Justice Board guidance: Work in court, we ensure that young people understand the requirements of their court order, ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in court, and make sure that they receive the support they need to understand and engage in the court processes.

All young people are assessed for SLCN using a screening tool

Young people's needs are taken into account when planning interventions to address their offending behaviour

Young people are supported in the police station

Gateshead Youth Justice Service is working with Clear Cut Communications to ensure all staff are confident in using the screening tool and signposting where appropriate.

6. Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note and comment on the contents of this report.
- (ii) Identify any areas of work which the committee would be interested in receiving updates about.

Contact: Emma Blackwell

Ext: (0191) 433 4559

TITLE OF REPORT: Demand Pressures, Children in Care and Child Protection

REPORT OF: Report of the Deputy Strategic Director, Children Social Care and Early Help

SUMMARY

This report provides the Committee with key headline activity information relating to children's social care, demonstrating the current demand pressures being felt across the service.

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee with key headline activity relating to children's social care demand pressures.
2. The report focuses on current demand (April to July Q1 2022/23) and comparisons are made to previous periods, including 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 which will give a sense of demand pre and post pandemic.
3. The report examines several areas of service demand across children's social care, including contacts, referrals, children in need, children in care and child protection.

Background

4. As reported in the performance update at the June 2022 committee, one of the challenges currently faced by children's social care services is the continuing increase in demand for support for children and families in Gateshead.
5. The increase is recognised nationally, and research published by the Association of Directors of Children's Services in February 2021¹, reflected a national picture of increasing demand to social care services. This general trend, which had been seen emerging for several years, has been complicated by the impact of Covid19 and the cost-of-living crisis.
6. Further research is currently underway to bring this evidence base up to date, with the final Association of Directors of Children's Services Safeguarding report (Phase 8) expected to be published at the beginning of November 2022.

¹ ADCS safeguarding pressures phase 7 - <https://adcs.org.uk/safeguarding/article/safeguarding-pressures-phase-7>

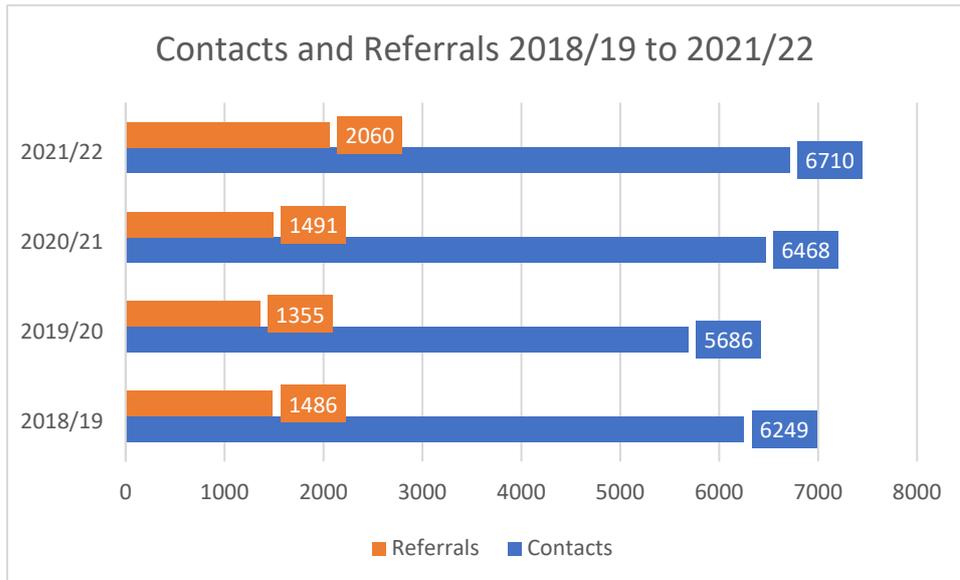
7. The End Child Poverty coalition reports² the North East as having the second highest rate of child poverty at 38% and this has seen the steepest rise in the last 5 years. All 12 North East local authorities feature in the top 20 local authorities nationally that have seen the sharpest increase in child poverty between 2014/15 and 2020/21
8. Around 16% of Gateshead residents live within the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England and many of the families open to Children's Social Care and Early Help live in the most deprived areas of the borough.
9. The following section of the report looks at the key headline data and examines areas of social care activity, highlighting current demand pressures and compares volume against previous years.

Contacts, Referrals & Assessments

10. The demand experienced at the first point of contact for Social Care Services (the front door) has shown an increasing trend since 2018/19. This demand can be measured by the number of contacts made, and the number of those contacts that are then referred into Social Care services.
11. The number of new contacts received in 2021/22 (6,710) was 7% more than the number received in 2018/19 (6,250) and 4% more than the number in 2020/21, which highlights a year-on-year increase in contacts made at the front door.
12. The first quarter of 2022/23 has seen a decrease in the number of contacts received, however the proportion that were deemed necessary to refer into social services is higher than any of the previous 4 years.
13. There has been no significant change in the source of contacts with the proportions remaining similar year on year, contacts from the police make up the largest source, followed by Health Services and then Anonymous contacts.
14. The proportion of contacts progressing to a referral increased significantly in the last full year (2021/22), from 24% in 2019/20 and 2020/21, to 31% in 2021/22. The trend has continued for the first quarter of the current year (2022/23), with 33% of contacts converting to a referral.
15. Figure 1 illustrates the numbers and conversion of contacts to referrals each reporting year since 2018/19 to 2021/2022 and demonstrates the increase in conversion of contact to referral.

² The End Child Poverty coalition research - <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>

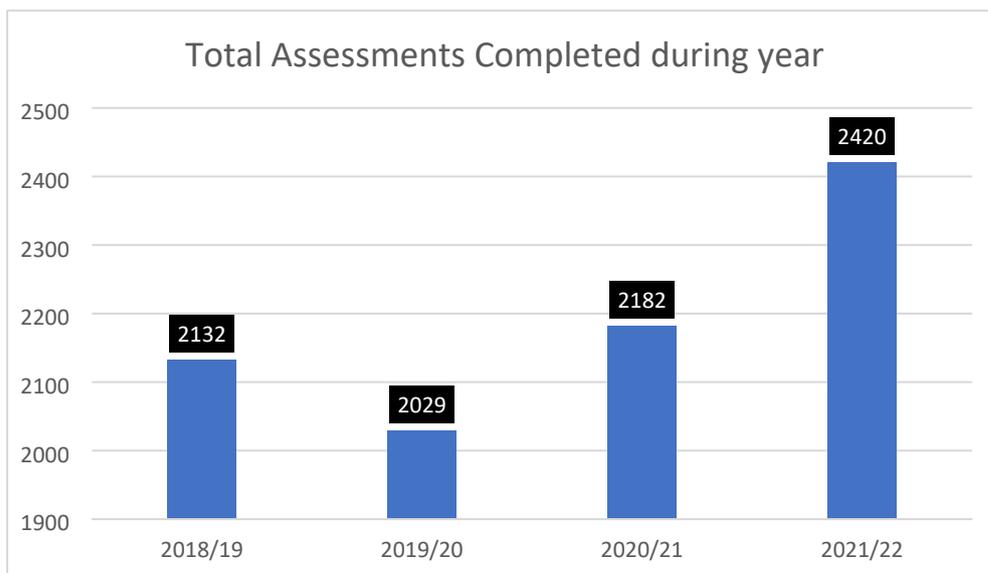
Figure 1 – Contacts and Referrals by year



16. The total number of referrals into Social Care services has increased year on year since 2019/20, with the most significant increase noted in 2021/22 (2060), 38% more compared to 2020/21 (1491). The number of referrals for Q1 of 2022/23 has reduced compared to the previous year but remains higher than the number reported in Q1 2019/20.

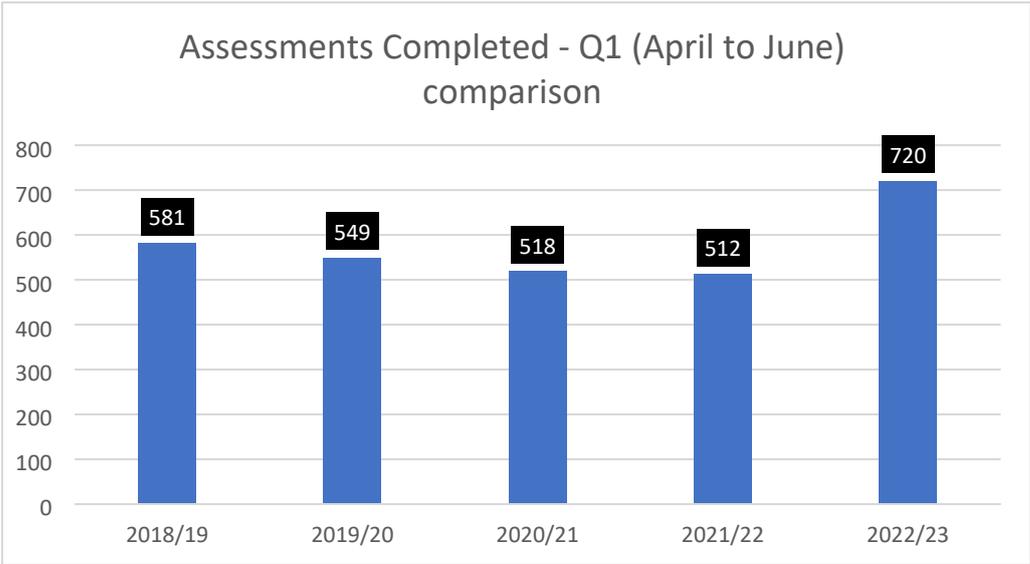
17. The increase in contacts and referrals described has resulted in a similar trend increase in the number of child and family assessments being undertaken each year. This highlights that the children and families subject to these contacts and referrals do require further intervention from Social Care. These increases are demonstrated in figure 2 (below).

Figure 2 – comparison of C&F assessments completed during the year



18. Quarter 1 data for 2022/23 has seen the highest number of assessments completed during the same period since 2018/19. The number of assessments completed in 2021/22 (2420) increased by 13% compared to 2018/19 (2132), shown in figure 3.

Figure 3 – Assessments completed during Quarter 1 Comparison



19. Of the children and family assessments completed, the numbers that then lead to a further safeguarding investigation (Section 47 Enquiry) give another example of the demand pressures resulting from increased contact and referral.

Child Protection

20. Except for the 2020/21 period, the number of Section 47 Enquiries commencing during the year has seen a year-on-year increase. In 2021/22, 747 were commenced, with 602 in 202/21, 640 in 2019/20 and 582 in 2018/19. This is a 28% increase in S47 Enquires in 2021/22 compared to 2018/19.

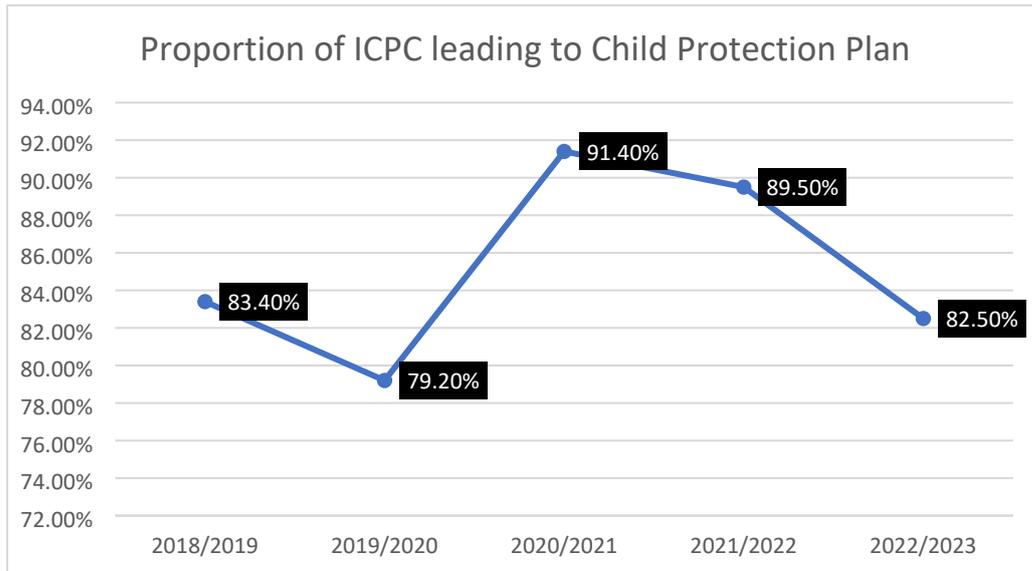
21. For the first quarter of 2022/23 there have been 172 Section 47 Enquiries initiated, which again is slightly lower than the same period in 2021/22 (179) but higher than the previous 3 years.

22. As a result of the Section 47 Enquiry, it may be necessary to progress the case to determine if the child or children in question can be protected without the need for a court order. This takes the form of an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), which is chaired by an independent reviewing officer and should take place within 15 days of the initial enquiry.

23. The number of ICPC’s starting during 2021/22 (384) was higher than the number in 2020/21 (319), but slightly lower than the number in 2019/20 (408). However, comparing to pre-pandemic levels, the number is higher than in 2018/19 (377).

24. Examining the conversion rates of Initial Child Protection Conference to Child Protection Plans, figure 4 demonstrates a reducing trend of conversion rate since April 2018, noting a spike during the 20/21 reporting period. This is in line with the reduction of children subject to a plan and more significantly a more noticeable reduction from 21/22 to 22/23 (however the 22/23 rate is only based on quarter 1 data, so this rate may well increase as the year progresses).

Figure 4 – Conversion rates for ICPC to CP Plans



25. The number of children who became subject to a Child Protection Plan (as a result of the outcome of the initial child protection conference) has seen a steady decline overall, since April 2018. The trend data is demonstrated in figure 5 on the next page.

Early Help and Domestic Abuse

26. Another area of demand is around the Target Family Support Team, who provide Early Help services to children and families. Looking at the trends since 2018/19 we can see that the highest number of referrals came in financial year 2018/19 where monthly referral average was 139. The referral rate decreased in 2019/20 and further in 2020/21 however there was a steady rise in 2021/22. In the last 12 months (up to end of June 2022) referrals continue to remain consistent with 1346, compared to the preceding 12 months, indicating a consistent level of demand.

27. Between April 2022 and June 2022, referrals into the Domestic Abuse Team have increased compared to the same period in 2021, with 10% more referrals being received. However, a drop in referrals in 2021/22 was seen, when comparing to the 2 years before this but current demand indicates that the numbers are increasing to levels similar to 2020/21.

Open Social Work Cases

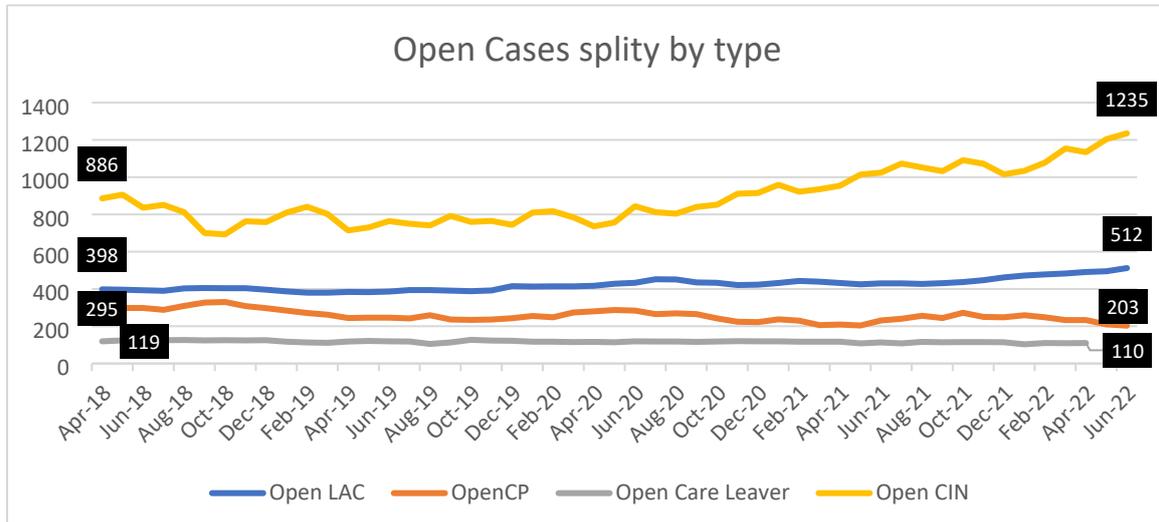
28. With the increase in demand, we have experienced an increase in the number of open cases across the service. The biggest increase can be seen in the number of children in need (who are not LAC or CP) with 886 as at April 2018 compared to 1235 as at June 2022. This equates to a 39% increase in children since April 2018 and a significant increase to social workers case load.

29. For children looked after, there has been an increase of 28% when comparing April 2018 (398) to June 2022 (512). This increase in safeguarding activity has meant additional pressure on the social care workforce, again, resulting in increased caseloads per social worker.

30. The number of care leavers in touch has remained static, and we are aware of the decrease in the number children subject to a child protection plan, which has shown a slow downward trend since April 2018.

31. Figure 5 illustrates the above-mentioned case trends since April 2018 through to June 2022.

Figure 5 – open cases as at month end since April 2018



Looked After Children

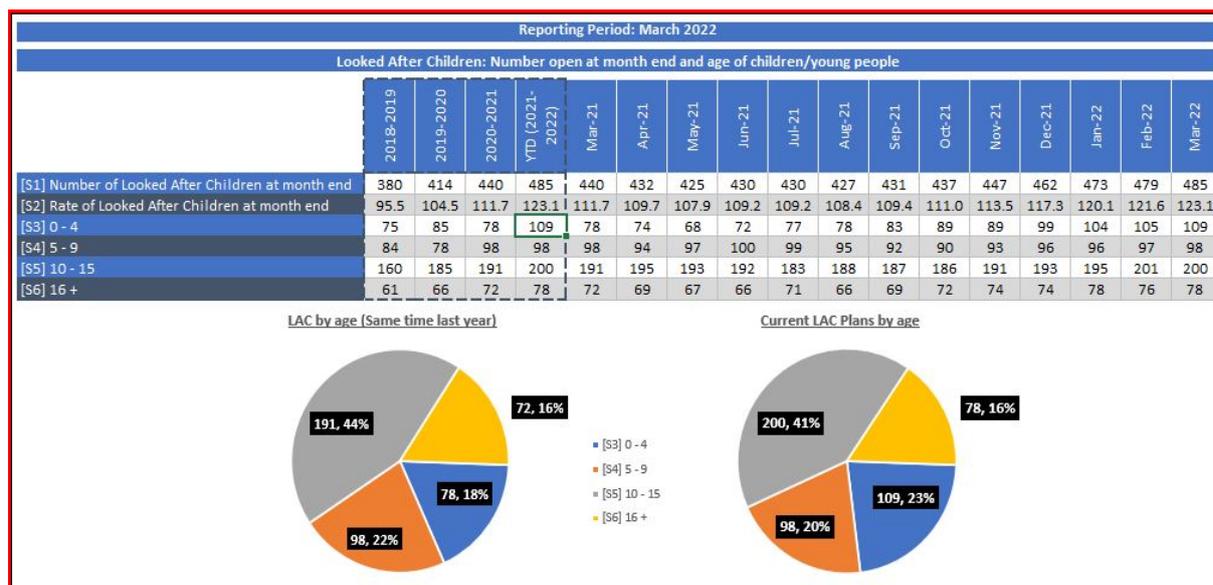
32. As noted above, the number of children looked after by Gateshead has seen a significant increase, especially during the period of April 2021 to March 2022, where the sharpest increase of children looked after has been seen.

33. Since April 2018, there has been a steady increase up until March 2021 from 392 to 440, an increase of 48 children. However, in the 1 year between April 2021 and March 2022, there has been a sharp increase of 51 children, taking the number of LAC to 491. The position at June 2022 continued this trend, with a total of 518 children looked after, the highest level of LAC recorded.

34. Figure 6 shows the majority of Looked After Children continue to be those between the ages of 10 -to- 15 years old, in line with previous years. At the end of March 22 compared with the same time last year there was a big increase in younger children aged 0-4 who were LAC with 23% compared with 18% in March 21 this was also an increase of 31 children.

35. On average, the cost to Gateshead Council for a child looked after is £40,000 per child annually. The outsourcing of placements comes at a higher cost, the most expensive of which costing £30,000 per week currently. This is not only occurring due to increased complexities of need for the children in the system but also due to the increased numbers of children requiring placements. Increased activity set out above has resulted in a significant impact on the social care workforce with caseloads per social worker increasing which will also need to be kept under review.

Figure 6 – Age Profile of looked after children



36. The following table shows the numbers of LAC starting and the number of those ending over the last 12 months from June 2022 and illustrates that the number of children entering care month on month is consistently higher than those leaving.

	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22
Starting	14	18	19	17	24	29	23	13	12	12	13	31
Ending	14	21	15	11	14	14	12	7	7	5	7	10
Increase	0	-3	+4	+6	+10	+15	+11	+6	+5	+7	+6	+21
As At	430	427	430	437	447	462	473	479	484	491	497	518

37. Further LAC analysis is currently underway, and a number of workshops have been held in recent months to examine the data and formulate a more detailed understanding of the pressures around the increase in Looked after children.

Recommendations

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
 - Receive the report for information around demand pressures
 - Identify any activities they would like more information about
 - Agree to receive a progress update in 6 months

Contact: Gary Lewis, Service Manager QA

Ext 2307

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TITLE OF REPORT: Mockingbird Programme – Progress Update

REPORT OF: Strategic Director, Children’s Social Care & Lifelong Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides members with an overview of Gateshead Councils Mockingbird Programme

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide members of the Families OSC with information in relation to the Mockingbird Programme and its implementation within Gateshead.

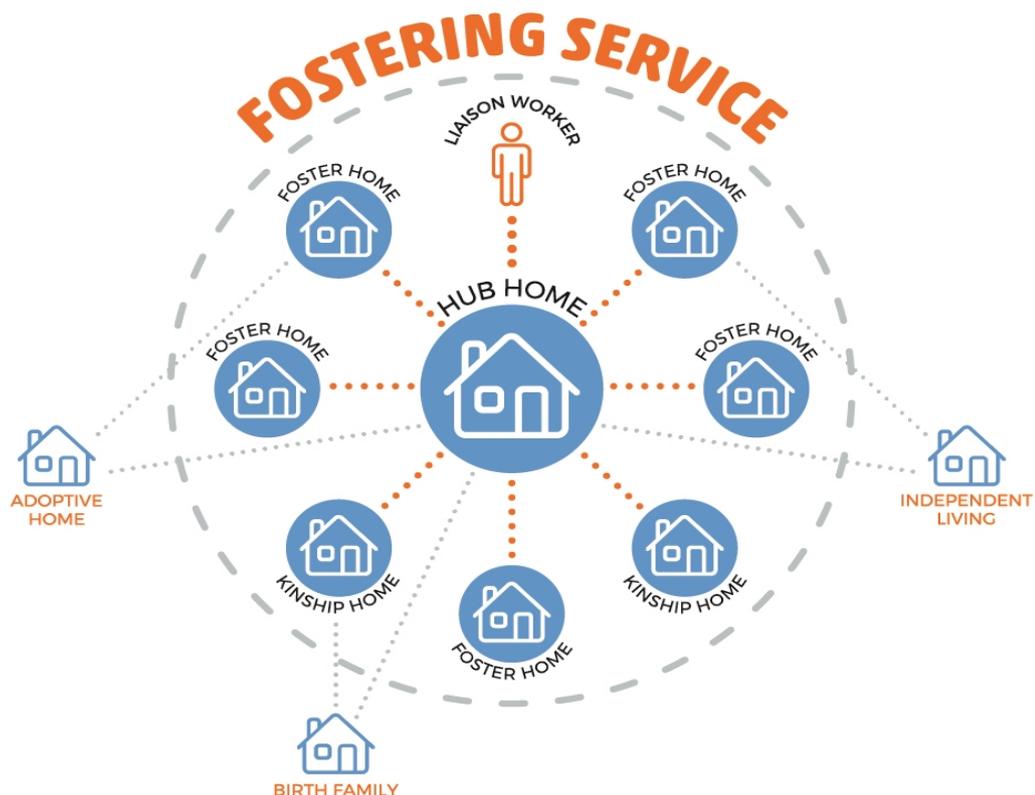
Background

2. The recruitment and retention of foster carers is a key priority for the Fostering Service. It is imperative we have a range of foster carers who can meet the needs of a range of children and young people. Locally and nationally there has been a decline in people wanting to become foster carers, therefore it is important we continue to look at innovative and create way to support foster carers, their birth families and the foster children and young people in their care. To help us achieve this we have embarked on a new approach which will complement the traditional fostering model, this is referred to as the Mockingbird programme.

The Mockingbird Model

3. The Mockingbird programme is an innovative method of delivering foster care using an extended family model which provides sleepovers, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities. It supports with the stability of fostering placements and strengthens the relationships between carers children and young people, fostering services and birth families.
4. The Mockingbird programme was developed in the USA by foster carers and is based on the concept of peer support, creating an extended family for cared for children and young people. The model provides:
 - a secure base for carers and children,
 - it improves the foster cares experience through peer support from foster carer to foster carer,

- it supports and improves family time for foster children and their brothers and sisters and children
 - it helps support the development of skills and confidence of the foster carers who are part of the hub.
5. Fostering Network own the licensing rights for the mockingbird programme and are the lead in provider in supporting Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Associates with its implementation and ongoing support and development.
 6. The hub being the group of carers in the mockingbird programme. Each hub (group) has a main carer, we refer to this carer as the hub carer. The hub carer has six to ten fostering families aligned to them. Collectively the fostering families have between six and eighteen children living across all the fostering households. The hub carer does not have any children or young people living with them as their role is to support other carers, be the first point of contact, have sleep overs for the children and young people so the other foster carers have some respite and arrange social and networking events, so the hub become part of a family model. The diagram below is a visual representation of the mockingbird hub model:



7. The hub carer is the main foster carer in the constellation. Constellation means the whole group of families in the model. Fostering families are supported by a fostering social worker. In the model the fostering social worker is referred to as a liaison worker. Michelle Sterricker from the fostering service, was successfully appointed to the role of liaison worker for the programme and will take up full responsibilities once the model fully comes on board in November 2022. Two foster carers from the same fostering household have been appointed as hub

carers and all fostering families in the constellation have been identified and aligned to the consultation.

8. A working group of representatives from the fostering service, Gateshead foster carers and care experienced young people have met to steer and drive forward this model. This has been supported by the regional working group as this approach is being driven out across all 12 North East Local Authorities, thanks to financial support from the Department of Education following South Tyneside Councils success at obtaining bid funding. The bid funding ensured financial support for the Mockingbird license and project set up costs. It is envisaged that the model will be self-sustaining once implemented due to the benefits which it brings to foster carers, children and young people, recruitment and retention and stability for young people.

Next Steps

9. A wider communication and launch will take place in November 2022. This will ensure people are aware of the mockingbird model and its benefits and provide people with the opportunity to learn more. A launch event is currently being planned for November.
10. We will also be working closely with the liaison worker and the hub to embed the model and gather information in relation to its success as part of the evaluation process. We are hopeful this will be successful and enable us to develop a second hub.
11. We will continue to work with our regional partners as part of the wider network as well as working closely with Fostering Network.

Recommendations

12. The Committee is asked to acknowledge the content of the report.

Contact: Claire Morris – Practice Lead

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TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Work Programme

REPORT OF: Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive
Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Summary

The report sets out the provisional work programme for Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

1. The Committee's provisional work programme was endorsed at the meeting held on 16 June 2022 and Councillors have agreed that further reports will be brought to future meetings to highlight current issues / identify any changes / additions to this programme.
2. Appendix 1 sets out the work programme as it currently stands. Any changes proposed to the programme will be set out in bold and italics for ease of identification.

Recommendations

3. The Committee is asked to
 - a) Note the provisional programme;
 - b) Note that further reports on the work programme will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues, which the Committee may be asked to consider.

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Draft Families OSC Work Programme 2022-23	
16 June 2022 1.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management & Improvement Framework – Year End Performance 2021-22 • Breastfeeding and Tongue Tie (to focus on targets and support available) • Implementation of Mosaic (the new Children’s Services ICT system) how it is improving processes etc and provide a demonstration to Committee • Results of Covid 19 Survey • Work Programme
8 September 2022 1.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted Improvement Plan – Progress Update • CAMHS & Impact of Covid – Update (to focus specifically on the waiting lists – what are the timescales, reasons for referrals etc and what are the interim arrangements which are being put in place given the reported length of the waiting list.) • Annual Report on Complaints and Representations – Children • Work Programme
20 October 2022 5.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Justice - impact of SALT • Poverty Proofing Schools / affordability of school uniforms • Mockingbird Programme – Progress Update • Children’s Social Care /Early Help– Demand pressures, children in care and child protection • Work Programme
1 December 2022 1.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management and Improvement Framework – Six Month report? • SEND Tribunal data (to focus on the number of Tribunals that are taking place and highlighting any themes arising and the outcomes) & Local Offer – SEND – Update (to include figures / information on Haskel Special School / the Jewish community) • Safeguarding Children - GSCP Annual Report and Plans • Inclusion in Mainstream • Work Programme
19 January 2023 1.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted – Annual Report • Performance of Secondary Schools • Ofsted Inspections / School Data – progress update • Permanent Exclusions / Suspensions and Elective Home Education – Update (to include the practice of “informal” suspensions).? • Work Programme

9 March 2023 1.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma Informed team update • Impact of Covid on new mothers – Update • Regional Adoption Agency Annual Report • Annual Conversation with Head Teachers of Special Schools • Work Programme
27 April 2023 1.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding Children – GSCP – Emerging Priorities • Children and Young People's Access to Dental Health Services in Gateshead – Update • Corporate Parenting Board - Annual Update • CAMHS – Progress Update • Work Programme

Issues for next year's work programme (2023/24) –

- Outreach Youth Work – targeted and universal
- ***The benefits arising from the changes to the music service***
- ***Children's Services approach to poverty***

Training identified

- SEND – Training on the process and the statutory responsibilities of the local authority (for Families OSC only)
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (for OSC and other members of the council)