

## EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL 13 July 2016

### Performance Information

1. As of week ending 24 June 2016:

Current Children Looked After figures are: 391 = 122.95 per 10,000

Current Child Protection figures are: 258 = 81.12 per 10,000

Current Children in Need figures are: 1316 = 413.82 per 10,000

### Children's Homes

2. Good progress is being made with regard to improving the Middlesbrough Children's Homes and ensuring that they provide a safe and comfortable environment for young people.
3. Refurbishment plans are also in place for all the homes – a new bathroom has been completed at Holly Lodge and new windows have been fitted at Fir Tree. This is just the beginning of major refurbishments for the three homes – during the course of the next year there will be significant improvements, including re-wiring, new kitchens and re-decoration.
4. Progress has also been made with regard to improving occupancy levels. Currently three young people are placed at Rosecroft and as they have very significant needs we are not planning to admit another child at present. Holly Lodge and Fir Tree are both fully occupied.
5. Rosecroft has recently been inspected by Ofsted and found to be "Good" which is a great achievement by the staff team.
6. The staffing review has now been implemented and a more robust staffing structure is in place – a number of new staff have been recruited. The use of "sleep-in" staff has now ended and waking night staff are in place. All the homes now have an experienced Manager and Deputy and a comprehensive training programme for staff is being implemented.

### South Tees Youth Offending Service

7. Over the last quarter South Tees Youth Offending Service (STYOS) have been training and preparing staff for the implementation of the 'Assetplus' assessment tool. This represents a significant business change on a local, regional and national level, both in terms of practice, process and service delivery. STYOS has

encountered numerous technical issues which has delayed implementation of this assessment tool, however these issues are now resolved and the Service went 'Live' on 30 June 2016.

8. Members may be aware that Youth Justice is currently under review. Charlie Taylor's report is due to be published, and there is widespread expectation that the landscape for Youth Justice Services is set to change. Until the report is published and the proposed changes are clear, Youth Offending Partnerships continue to have a statutory duty to provide Youth Justice Services. To that end, STYOS are currently in the process of writing the strategic plan for 2016/17.

### **Adoption/Fostering**

9. The increase in Connected Persons assessments continues to challenge the family placement team. Connected Persons are wider family members, friends or others who have a relationship or a connection to the child. Supporting connected persons to care for a child, where it is safe for them to do so, is a positive outcome for the child and as such a clear aim for the team. Work continues within the team to improve this process, exploring all viable options for children whilst navigating foster care regulations and minimising delay in decision making.
10. Most of the current children with a plan for adoption are now in adoptive placements or are in the matching process and we have increased the number of fostering to adopt placements over the last few months therefore reducing the number of moves children need to make.
11. We have also had a recent agreement to Special Situation payments to our foster carers for placements with particularly challenging children and young people. We anticipate this will assist our ability to recruit new carers and retain more challenging children in house and therefore over the long term reduce the reliance on independent fostering providers.

### **Initial Response Quality and Standards**

12. Following the Inspection 2015 whereby it was noted that the capacity within the IRO service was insufficient to meet service demands, an Agency IRO was recruited immediately and a business case outlining appropriate staffing levels has been prepared. The IROs have been successful in Job Evaluation which has seen their grade move from Level L to M. This is in line with Assistant Team Managers within the service, providing resilience and progression opportunities for staff.
13. The Head of Initial Response, Quality & Standards is due to leave the authority on the 15 July to take up position in Darlington. The advert for a replacement closed on the 23 June and interviews held on 8 July.
14. A meeting has taken place with Redcar and Cleveland to discuss the prospect of a shared Children's Hub. Discussions are at a very early stage but this will see a South Tees Hub acting as single point of access for referrals.

**Councillor Michael Carr**  
**Executive Member, Children's Social Care**