

Performance Information

As of 21 December 2017:-

Current Children Looked After (LAC) figures are:	438	(136.1 per 10,000)
Current Child Protection (CP) figures are:	252	(78.3 per 10,000)
Current Children in Need (CIN) figures are:	1385	(430.4 per 10,000)

The rate per 10,000 is now being calculated using the mid 2016 population estimate of 32,180.

The children's services department believes in delivering child focused outcomes for families. To achieve this we need to invest in our staff and their development. Therefore, with this in mind, I am pleased to report that a further three ASYE' candidates (social work Assessed Supported Year in Employment) have passed the ASYE programme. The department's investment in front line staff continues with the introduction of Firstline – a training opportunity to grow and develop managers' abilities and strengths. Managers have attended a skills workshop and completed an interview process to assess their developmental needs. This innovative training will be accessible within the New Year.

The service has also been involved in the first stages of the field research for the 'What Works Centre for Children's Social Care'. The Centre will develop a strong evidence based knowledge bank around effective interventions and practice systems in children's social care, and will share resources, knowledge and development with practitioners and decision-makers. Middlesbrough has been a part of this process to share ideas, understand how social work theory underpins practice, and support the development stages of this centre. We look forward to receiving updates on this collaborative working. Our staff received good feedback on their integrity and creativity when embracing this DfE-led research development.

Assessment and Care Planning

The Assessment and Care Planning teams are under significant pressure at present due to high caseloads and the complexity of referrals. Social workers and team managers are working to drive improvements in performance and have ensured that supervisions are updated and that visits that have taken place with children are recorded.

Action to recruit and retain additional social workers, both staff and agency, has boosted morale. However, there is an extreme difficulty in securing quality experienced social workers across the region. A proposal to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers in Middlesbrough is currently being drawn up by the department in conjunction with HR.

Resource Team

The Resource Team currently consists of a Contact Service, Home Support Service (parenting support 0-11 and 11-18), Returning to Middlesbrough Project ('edge of care' support) and Home Support for Children with Disabilities.

Following an interim review regarding service delivery, proposals have been drafted regarding the potential reconfiguration of the service in line with the vision 'Believe in Families'. A revised structure is to be job evaluated, with an estimated timeline for consultation commencing in January. The redesign will ensure that the needs of children with disabilities continue to be met to the high standard already set. However there will be a significant shift to an edge of care service, to support more children to either stay at home or return home, and other lower level support more appropriately aligned to non-statutory services. The service will include the development of a Family Group Conferencing approach that will span children's services.

Children's Homes

The three children's homes continue to be maximised to their potential. Work is ongoing to strengthen the skills and resilience of staff teams, to provide care to our most complex young people. The aim is that that, whenever possible, their needs are met in Middlesbrough, where a joined up approach to their care can be offered by professionals they know and professionals who can remain involved should they return home. In addition, with very close links with the Edge of Care Support Team (Returning to Middlesbrough Project), there is a greater chance of successfully returning young people home.

The three homes continue to provide care to young people with increasingly high level of need. To continue the development of the work, an operations manager is being recruited with a view to building the service, using elements of good practice from other models – for example 'No Wrong Door'.

Firtree Children's Home has been inspected in December by Ofsted and received an overall 'good' rating. Inspections of the other two homes are anticipated in early January. To drive the service forward, the work of the operations manager will include devising an 'achieving outstanding' plan.

South Tees Youth Offending Service

South Tees Youth Offending Service once again supported Middlesbrough Council's 'In Out of the Cold' project which supports the homeless, those in housing need or hardship. Young people open to the service were involved in filling and wrapping shoe boxes ready to be delivered to Newport Hub, which were handed out on Monday 18th December. The

young people involved have thoroughly enjoyed being involved, with one stating 'caring for the homeless matters' and another stating 'this kind of reparation has been good because we are giving back to people'.

South Tees YOS have recently welcomed TRAC advocates to their Junior Attendance Centre to deliver a session with young people. Advocates from TRAC had historically been involved in the criminal justice system and each had a wealth of personal life experience. The advocates spoke about the struggles they faced from a young age and how they eventually broke free from a life of crime and addiction. TRAC advocates work closely with the police, prisons and schools, sharing their experience and telling their stories. The aim of the session was to provide inspiration to young people to divert them away from the criminal justice system and a life of crime. The young people who attended found this to be such a positive session that STYOS hope to invite TRAC to return again in the near future.

Troubled Families

Troubled Families, in partnership with Job Centre Plus, recently organised a recruitment event which saw over 200 people attend. Following this event 8 people commenced employment, 16 attended job interviews, and 31 commenced training.

In partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions, the Troubled Families team are working closely with the education department at HMP Holme House (Nuvos), with a view to embedding 'Universal Credit' awareness into the Nuvos syllabus offered to prisoners. The team have already worked with tutors in relation to providing up to date benefit awareness that has been useful in their budgeting and health and well-being classes for prisoners.

Councillor Michael Carr
Executive Member for Children's Services