

Performance Information

As of 24th May 2018:-

Current Children Looked After (LAC):	487	(Rate = 151.3)
Current Child Protection (CP)	248	(Rate = 77.1)
Current Children in Need (CIN):	1144	(Rate = 355.5)

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

Children's Trust Board

The Children's Trust continue to meet regularly and are making progress with the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) work stream. A performance matrix is being developed to enable measurable progress to be reported in future. The board now meets every two months.

Assessment and Care Planning

The Project team commenced in April and are now into week 6 of social work delivery – this is going well and has seen caseloads reduce in the assessment and care planning teams. Initially they picked up work to reduce capacity, but we are now moving to them picking up work from the duty system in order to ensure a smooth transition to a new proposed operating structure.

The assessment and care planning teams have recruited to all but one social work vacancy and are awaiting new starters to commence in posts – these are scheduled to take place between now and August. All Team Managers are in place and all but one Assistant Team Managers are in place. In the interim we have 5 agency social workers supporting the service.

Performance reporting has improved as has social workers evidencing the work that they were completing within performance reporting – we are now working on the improvement plan to improve the evidencing within case notes of the direct work completed with children. We are also working on streamlining assessments and SMART planning.

The Head of Service for Assessment Care and Planning has been leading on the recruitment of the consultant social worker in order to embed the Front Line package of training. In effect this is a training school for social workers within Middlesbrough Council. Our first four candidates will commence the First Line training in September 2018.

Resource Team

Progress continues regarding the implementation of a Family Group Conference team. The work of the wider team continues to focus significantly on edge of care support, aimed at reducing the numbers of looked after children.

Children's Homes

The Children's Homes Operations Manager continues to drive practice and quality care, with the aim of all four homes achieving an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating. Work continues to strengthen the skills and resilience of staff teams, to provide care to our most complex young people, with the view that their needs are best met in Middlesbrough. Collaborative work is also underway with our social work colleagues to appropriately match young people to any vacancies or future planned vacancies, to ensure maximum capacity and reduced unit costings.

There is now a 'Childrens Homes Project' underway as a strand of the Believe in Families programme, to consider existing and new provisions. This project is informed by the work undertaken as part of the 'Sufficiency Strategy'. The focus of additional provision will be edge of care support, with the aim of reducing the numbers of looked after children and additional in-house resources for those children who need to become looked after.

South Tees Youth Offending Service

STYOS is currently in the process of writing their strategic youth justice plan. A staff consultation event has already taken place to review last year's plan and to consider priorities for the coming year. The new plan will take in to account learning from the pilot inspection which took place in December 2017, and recommendations from thematic inspections throughout the last year. The plan will be produced by summer 2018 in line with grant requirements.

STYOS held an open day for Board Members on 9th May where they had the opportunity to meet front line staff and young people open to the service. Feedback from the day has been positive, and will be repeated in future.

Young people subject to STYOS supervision have recently been engaging in various Art projects to increase their constructive use of leisure time. One of the projects was for young people to take photographs of the local area with the intention of submitting entries to a competition being run by the Police and Crime Commissioner where winners would see their work displayed in the new Cleveland Community Safety Hub. Numerous entries were submitted, and we are delighted that one of our young people has had their photograph of the 'Temenos' chosen for display within the 'Middlehaven Room'. Our understanding is that this will be a full wall display of the photograph. The PCC intends to invite all winners to the Community Safety Hub at a later date for a small presentation and the chance to see the photograph displayed within the building.

Troubled Families

A small amount of funding will be released for 'parental conflict' parenting programmes. This is being rolled out nationally to selected Local Authorities, of which Middlesbrough is one. Senior Managers will receive high level training so that the evidence-based programmes can be showcased and gain strategic support before it is rolled out to services.

Middlesbrough Troubled Families have been identified nationally for good practice in relation to the recruitment events they have held.

Looked after children

The refreshed Sufficiency Strategy is in final draft form, as is the Market Position statement. The action plan, which aims to meet each of the recommendations within the Market Position statement, is to be presented to the Children's Director in early June 2018, and then to the Corporate Parenting Board.

A fostering project group and a children homes project group have been established to drive the strategy and both will report to the LAC Project Board chaired by the Children's Director.

The fostering marketing strategy will be rolled out from early June 2018 and will be reviewed in September 2018. It will be a three year strategy.

Placement stability remains high, in the 90% range.

Quality and Standards

From June 2018 the team of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) will be fully staffed, a position we have not been in for some time. This is really positive for the team and will support the role and function of the independent IROs on behalf of our children and young people.

In addition the team has also recruited a child participation worker to support and improve young people's participation in the Child Protection and Looked After process. This includes to date work with young people to develop easy read child protection information leaflets and feedback forms. Meeting 'menus' have been developed that allow children and young people to select the part of the conference agenda that they would like to be involved in. The participation officer is visiting young people who would otherwise choose not to engage in their meetings, giving them information about the process, understanding the role of the IRO, and encouraging them to give their views and feedback.

Young people have also been listened to by the introduction of the MOMO (Mind of My Own) app which enables children and young people to communicate directly with their IRO and other professionals. This is currently in the planning stages of implementation and will provide a safe and innovative way to communicate with our young people and seek their views.

Our newly qualified Social Workers in their assessed and supported year in practice continue to showcase excellent social work practice by developing group supervision models. The group supervision model for ASYEs and student pod has been independently evaluated by Teesside University positively and will be showcased at a regional social work event. The student pod resulted in 100% recruitment to Middlesbrough, and we have successfully recruited 11 new social workers to join our programme.

Strategic Services

Strategic Services for Children's Services was established in March 2018, within the Prevention and Partnership's Directorate. The Service has been created to support the operation of Children's Services as a Directorate. The Service offers centralised challenge, drive and collaboration in the form of Quality Assurance, performance, transformation and strategy. This supports the Senior Leadership team's ability to drive improvement and innovation in the Service and offers a consistent approach the improvement across the three Directorates. It also supports the Children's Services link to corporate services and priorities.

The service is made up of a team which includes the Believe in Families Transformation Programme, Voice of the Child Participation lead, quality assurance and performance leads. It supports the Children's Services Improvement Board and preparation for impending Ofsted Inspections. The team is made up of experienced officers and managers, with a solid knowledge base of the children's agenda and a wealth of experience from working in other Local Authorities. It will aim to share good practice and strengthen what we already do well in Middlesbrough.

Councillor Michael Carr
Executive Member for Children's Services