



**TRAFFORD  
COUNCIL**

**AGENDA PAPERS MARKED 'TO FOLLOW' FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date: Tuesday, 5 July 2022**

**Time: 6.30 p.m.**

**Place: Committee Rooms 2&3, Trafford Town Hall, Talbot Road, Stretford,  
M32 0TH**

<b>A G E N D A</b>	<b>PART I</b>	<b>Pages</b>
6. <b>MINUTES</b>		1 - 14
To receive and, if so determined, to approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings held on 9 <sup>th</sup> February and 15 <sup>th</sup> March 2022.		
7. <b>OFSTED MONITORING</b>		15 - 56
To consider the attached report.		
8. <b>SOCIAL CARE REVIEW</b>		57 - 78
To consider the attached presentation.		
10. <b>ELECTIVELY HOME EDUCATED</b>		79 - 88
To consider the attached report.		

**SARA TODD**  
Chief Executive

Membership of the Committee

Councillors D. Western (Chair), Miss L. Blackburn (Vice-Chair), J. Bennett, L. Dagnall, R. Duncan, F. Hornby, S. Maitland, S. Procter, M.J. Welton, G. Whitham, A.M. Whyte, D. Acton (ex-Officio) and M.P. Whetton (ex-Officio).

### Further Information

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## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**9 FEBRUARY 2022**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor D. Western (in the Chair).

Councillors Mrs. P. Young (Vice-Chair), J. Bennett, Miss L. Blackburn, J. Dillon, S. Maitland and A. New.

### In attendance

Jill McGregor	Corporate Director of Children's Services
Pamela Wharton	Director for Social Care and Early Support
Karen Samples	Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance
Andy Zilkha	Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service
Sally Smith	SEN Advisory Service (SENAS) Service Manager and Advisor for Inclusion
Colin Reynolds	Interim Service Manager of the Community Learning Disability Team
Jaqueline Coulton	Chief Nurse, Trafford CCG
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T. Carey, S. J. Haughey, S. Longden, A.M. Whyte and D. Acton.

### **21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Dillon declared an interest as her child was in the preparing for adulthood system and in relation to her role as a Governor responsible for looked after children at a school in Trafford.

### **22. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions were received.

### **23. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 be agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

### **24. PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD**

The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance delivered a presentation to the Committee, which provided an overview of the report with support from the Interim Service Manager of the Community Learning Disability Team, the SEN Advisory Service (SENAS) Service Manager and Advisor for Inclusion, and the Chief Nurse for Trafford CCG. The slides were to be shared with the Committee after the meeting. The presentation covered the data dashboard which was utilised to track the services key performance indicators

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(KPIs). The dashboard enabled comparisons with national, local, and statistical neighbours.

The Committee were shown the outcomes for Children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities. The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance explained where Trafford Were doing well and areas for improvement. The Committee were shown the agreed priorities for the service and the Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance provided details on work being done to meet those priorities. The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance detailed the findings from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and mapped out which priorities addressed those needs.

The SENAS Service Manager and Advisor for Inclusion informed the Committee of the work the Council were doing to address their duties for children and young people on EHC Plans throughout their school lives and when they transition into adulthood. The Interim Service Manager of the Community Learning Disability Team went through the three pathways Trafford had in place for young people with different levels of need to ensure they received the right support for them.

The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance went through the feedback received from the recent LGA peer review, which had identified several areas where Trafford were doing well and provided a set of recommendations for improvement. The recommendations were captured within an action plan and linked into ambition 4 within the improvement plan. The Committee were informed of the positive impact the impact the Council's kickstart apprentices had had within the service. The presentation concluded with a list of next steps for the service.

Following the presentation Councillor Maitland asked whether parents and young people could access the Council's Liquid Logic system. The SENAS Service Manager and Advisor for Inclusion responded that they were not currently able to, but work was ongoing in the creation of a portal that would increase accessibility and might provide access to parents. The Corporate Director for Children's Services added that Liquid Logic was the database used by the service and work was ongoing to increase accessibility. The key aspect regarding parents and young people was ensuring all relevant information was accurately captured and stored to aid in the delivery of support.

Councillor Maitland noted that some of the contact information for volunteering was wrong and asked who was responsible for updating the information on the Trafford directory. The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance responded that there was a dedicated officer, but providers needed to inform the Council if their contact information had changed.

Councillor Maitland then asked how smooth the transition from school into adulthood was. The Interim Service Manager of the Community Learning Disability Team responded that the experience varied depending on which pathway someone was on, but the service was working to make the transition as smooth as possible for all pathways. The Corporate Director for Children's Services added that a key element in the Council's approach was working with the parent

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experience panels, which were made up of parents who had experienced the transition.

Councillor Maitland followed up her question by asking where those who were not satisfied with the service needed to contact. The SENAS Service Manager and Advisor for Inclusion answered that it depended upon the setting. If the young person was still in school, then they would inform the schools SENCO and the EHC coordinators were key contacts for all young people with EHC Plans. The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance added that they could also go to the Trafford SEND Information, Advice, and Support Service (SENDIASS) and the Trafford Parents Forum.

Councillor Maitland's final question was whether the Board had been established and how many cases they had dealt with so far. The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance responded that the Board had been established, although they had not heard any cases as they were dealt with directly or through the EHC coordinator.

Councillor Acton welcomed the inclusion of KPIs within the report as it provided context to aid the Committee in understanding the performance of the service. The Councillor noted that the plans were very good, but the focus now had to be on the delivery of those plans. Councillor Acton welcomed the introduction of the Parent Experience Panels and the challenge they would bring. The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance thanked Councillor Acton for his comments and informed the Committee of the governance arrangements in place for monitoring the delivery and performance of the plans, which included the SEND Strategic Board and the Start Well Board.

Councillor Bennet asked about the three pathways and how much input young people had as to which pathway they would be directed to. The Interim Service Manager for the Community Learning Disability Team responded that young people were very involved in selecting the pathway they were on. He explained how the pathway linked in with the golden thread of the young person's voice that ran through all work within the service. The Committee were informed of the reviews and contacts with young people and the Council's approach, which ensured young people felt safe in expressing their views.

Councillor Dillon asked how the parents for the Parent Experience Panels were selected. The Councillor spoke about the barriers she had faced in receiving Health Care for a young person over 16 and asked what support was available to help with issues such as needle phobic. The Councillor also noted the reference to an Adult Care Transition Assessment and asked for an explanation as to what they involved.

Councillor Dillon's final question was to the nature of the pathways within the report, whether they were virtual pathways, and how they appeared from a young person's perspective. The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance responded that the Communication and Engagement group, which included representatives of the Trafford Parents' Forum, were working on the selection of parents for the Parent Experience Panels. With regards to needle

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phobia, GP practice nurses were able to provide support. The Corporate Director for Children's Services added that case studies would be included within future reports to aid in understanding what pathways were and how they worked.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report and presentation be noted.
- 2) That further reports on pathways are to include case studies.

## **25. YOUTH PROVISION**

The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service went through the slides circulated with the agenda. The presentation covered the vision of the service, the street talk service, how street talk fed into the rest of the services, locality projects delivered in 2020/21, Youth Provision case studies, feedback from young people and parents, partnerships and the wider youth offer, Serious Youth Violence, Gaps and Issues within the Service, Objectives of the service and timescales for achieving them, and the final section covered some of the successes the service had achieved. The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service provided additional details and depth to each slide as he went through the presentation. Following the conclusion of the slides the Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service informed the Committee that the Council had passed their major accreditation for information advice and guidance, which included the street talk service.

Councillor New asked whether it would be possible to have some focused information about the work being done within the localities especially around county lines. Councillor New also asked whether there was a qualification people could work towards. The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service responded that more detailed information was available through the monthly monitoring, which he would be happy to supply to ward Councillors.

The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service informed the Committee that the service was aware some of the young people they worked with were being exploited across county lines and the service picked this up by linking with the Youth Justice and community safety teams. The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service asked which park knives had been found and stated he would pass the information onto the community safety team.

The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service informed the Committee that he was currently in discussion with Trafford College with a view to possibly offering a qualification. The Corporate Director of Children's Services added that the Youth Justice Service, the missing service, and the specialist complex safeguarding team were being brought together into a vulnerable adolescent's service. The Council were providing a series of programmes and support within schools around violence reduction, which was being led by the violence reduction coordinator.

Councillor Maitland asked about nitrous oxide cannisters and whether any work was ongoing around the dangers of nitrous oxide. The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service responded that all the staff in the service were trained

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in discussing drug and alcohol misuse with young people and were passing on messages about the risks to young people. The Council had a joint approach with Early Break and could refer young people into that service.

Councillor Bennett raised concerns about the lack of work being done within Sale Moor and asked what work was planned to be done in the area. The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service agreed that not enough work had been done within Sale Moor and assured Councillor Bennet that it was an area they were looking to address. The Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service expressed that the service did not have very strong links within the Sale Moor community and asked that Councillor Bennet share any contacts she was aware of.

Councillor Blackburn asked whether the youth services were linking in with Amey and the police to share information about where the hotspots for nitrous oxide use were. The Corporate Director of Children's Services responded that the service shared data and mapping with the police along with regular meetings and panels with Council and Police representation.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That monthly monitoring data be shared with ward Councillors who requested it.
- 3) That the Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service pass the information from Councillor New onto the Community Safety Team.
- 4) That Councillor Bennet pass on any contacts for the Sale Moor area to the Service Manager of the Youth Engagement Service.

**26. OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE**

The Director for Social Care and Early Support gave a brief overview of the report which had been circulated as part of the agenda. The Committee had last received an update in October following the last Ofsted visit and had not been able to share the full outcomes of that visit until they were published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, which had been included within the pack. Overall Ofsted had found that children's situations were improving due to the interventions Trafford were putting in place, but workforce instability and weaknesses in first line management were impacting on the quality of relationships and decision making for children. Performance management along with Corporate and Political Leadership were all seen to be very strong.

Following the visit Trafford had reviewed the improvement plan. The 8 Ambitions remained but 3 overarching priorities had been added of workforce stability, leadership and management, and the quality of practice. Workforce instability had continued with turnover being higher than desired. 14 new social workers had been recruited within the last 6 months and the DfE had recognised that Trafford had put all the correct things in place to improve the situation. The Committee were informed that since the visit Trafford had introduced a management

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restructure, supervision frameworks had been revised, the Leadership Forum had been established, and the quality assurance framework had been implemented.

The Director for Social Care and Early Support spoke of the services first "Practice Fortnight" with sessions attended by 750 practitioners and managers, which included a session from a headteacher explaining what it was like to run a school. In the next year it was planned to have a "Year of Practice" with learning and development opportunities available for all of the workforce. In addition, a strengthening practice programme had been commissioned, which was a three-year investment in practitioners. A programme for managers and leaders was also under development, which would enable them to provide additional support and leadership to staff.

Feedback from the DfE review, held the previous week, stated that everyone they spoke to within Trafford's Children's Services was passionate about making a difference for children, which was unusual to see with an authority under improvement. The Director for Social Care and Early Support concluded their overview by stating that Trafford still had a long way to go on the improvement journey with variability in practice still being an issue, but that addressing this was a priority going forward.

Following the overview, the Chair noted the ongoing issues with management oversight and asked what steps could be put in place to reach a level where the Committee could be assured it was robust. The Corporate Director for Children's Services responded that the Leadership Forum brought together all the Heads of Service and Practice Managers and gave them the opportunity to review what was going well and identify areas to be strengthened. The Forum was integral in building consistency across services and turning shared expectations into tangible decisions. The Forum met every two weeks and looked at audit information along with examples of good and bad practice. In addition, the supervision framework had been redeveloped in partnership with practitioners and managers which ensured supervision, advice, and guidance were helpful and consistent across services. The Leadership Forum, Supervision Framework, and formal external programme were all key platforms which would enable the service to have confidence in everything managers do.

Councillor Maitland asked whether this work linked into what Jan Haworth was doing. The Corporate Director of Children's Services responded that Jan Haworth was an expert in child protection and planning and had been commissioned to work with Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers, who were responsible for reviewing children's plans. That piece of work would look at whether Trafford were effective in progressing those plans. Jan Haworth had also been asked to conduct a piece of work talking to children and families to identify whether plans were meaningful and helpful.

Councillor Maitland asked about the 4P approach and why there had only been limited progress so far. The Corporate Director of Children's Services responded that the approach linked to safeguarding and youth justice. The approach had been developed in other areas and was shown to be effective when working with



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police. The progress had been limited so far as it required a full system change and the change journey had been delayed by the pandemic.

Councillor Blackburn asked whether the rate of turnover had impacted the audits of practice and when it was expected that the requires improvement rating would move to being good. The Corporate Director of Children's Services responded that improvement was being seen with more audits being rated as good. The service was also seeing an increase in the number of compliments being received. The Corporate Director of Children's Services was confident that when the service was reinspected Ofsted would validate the improvements the service had made.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and finished at 8.38 p.m.

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## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**15 MARCH 2022**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor D. Western (in the Chair).

Councillors Mrs. P. Young (Vice-Chair), J. Dillon, S. Maitland, A. New, A.M. Whyte and D. Acton (ex-Officio)

#### In attendance

Councillor Hynes	Executive Member for Children's Services
Jill McGregor	Corporate Director of Children's Services
Jude Brown	Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning
Jane Hynes	Public Health Programme Manager
Laura	Student attending Trafford College
Ann	Student attending Trafford College
Liberty	Student attending Trafford College
Stephanie Ferraioli	Governance Officer
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bennett, Miss L. Blackburn, T. Carey, S. J. Haughey and S. Longden

### **27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.

### **28. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions were received.

### **29. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 9 February 2022 be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

### **30. PRESENTATION FROM TRAFFORD COLLEGE**

Three students from Trafford College named Laura, Ann, and Liberty who were all members of the Equalities Council and the Green College Assembly. Each student presented information to the Committee on issues that concerned them.

Laura informed the Committee of the advantages of having a healthy lifestyle. Laura suggested that reducing the cost of gym membership for the under 20's would go a long way to encourage a fuller involvement in sports activities, reducing stress, improving mental health and an altogether better lifestyle, which would lead to more happiness and reduce the risk of disease.

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Councillor Maitland was not aware that a student discount was not available at leisure centres and asked Laura if they were having to pay the same as adults. Laura answered that young people under twenty, including students, were having to pay the same as working adults. The Executive Member for Children's Services thanked Laura for coming and providing the Councillors with the information, as she had learned a lot.

Ann spoke to the Committee about the cost of transport within Greater Manchester from a student's perspective. The Committee were informed of the importance of public transport for students and the costs associated with using the service which ranged from £50 to £80 a month. Ann explained how the tram was a far better way for young people to commute to college, but it was very expensive. Busses were cheaper but the routes and frequency meant that the journey took far longer. Ann proposed that the "Our Pass" should be extended to include trams as well as busses to aid young people to attend college.

Councillor New agreed with Ann about her comments on the issues with the public transport system. Councillor New added that Partington was a particularly stark example of having a lack of public transport options, with only one bus route for the whole community. Councillor New thanked Ann for bringing people's attention to the issue and suggested that Ann support and look to be involved with the plans to improve public transport suggested by the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Liberty spoke to the Committee about climate change and noted the council's plan to be carbon neutral by 2038 and the government's plan to be carbon neutral by 2050. However, Liberty stated that those plans were not enough to keep the global temperature to less than 1.5 degrees. Liberty informed the Committee of actions individuals and the council could take in order to reduce carbon emissions, which included switching to LED lights, making sure new builds were more energy efficient, installing solar panels on new builds, and improving recycling.

Councillor Maitland agreed with Liberty's points and spoke of the ways that she was trying to address her carbon footprint. The Executive Member for Children's Services thanked Liberty for expressing her points about the threats of climate change and the actions that could be taken in a very powerful way. The Chair thanked Laura, Ann, and Liberty for bringing those very important topics and their suggestions to address the issues to the Committee's attention.

### RESOLVED:

- 1) That the information be noted.
- 2) That Laura, Ann, and Liberty be thanked for attending the meeting and for bringing the issues and their suggestions to the Committee's attention.

## 31. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

The Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning gave a brief overview of the report that had been circulated to the Committee. The service was starting to experience more stability. The work culture and workloads had previously been

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identified as the reason for staff leaving. The most recent data showed the reasons staff were leaving had changed, with most staff listing personal reasons such as financial requirements. Additional checks had been brought in to ensure new starters were given a full induction to support them in their role. The Committee were informed that recruitment was a national problem for all public services, not just social care.

The Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning recognised that the number of agency staff was too high. The Committee were informed of schemes the service had brought in to convert agency staff to council staff. Work was also ongoing regionally which looked to put a cap on the cost of agency staff. The Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning concluded by detailing the work the service was doing to increase recruitment within the service and the most recent appointments, which included two heads of service.

Following the overview Councillor Dillon asked whether all social workers received EHCP training. The Corporate Director of Children's Services responded that some training on EHCPs had been delivered during the practice fortnight in November. Changes were being made to the system to make it easier for social workers to view children's EHCPs. In addition, two briefing sessions on SEN were being held and a detailed training plan was being developed for all staff.

Councillor Acton welcome the change in reasons for leaving and what the service had done to bring about the change. The Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning detailed the changes in approach around supervision and support provided by managers, which included the introduction of the supervision framework. The Corporate Director for Children's services added that Ofsted had noted the improvements in supervision and support for staff during their recent visit.

The Chair asked whether there was opportunity for service users and staff to provide feedback to the service. The Corporate Director of Children's Services informed the Committee of the introduction of live audits, which involved visiting service users to gather their feedback on the performance of the service. Surveys were used to try and gain feedback but the return rate was low. The social workers health check was on way that staff could provide feedback and there was also the annual council wide staff survey. The Executive Member for Children's Services added that the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum were two service user groups who gave regular feedback and challenge to the service.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

## **32. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS**

Although tremendous work was being done by the current carers who were very loyal to the service, challenges remained in recruitment and retention. The service received a good level of enquiries from potential carers but not enough went on to become foster carers. The service was looking to utilise digital media to advertise further.

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Most of Trafford's children in care were over 10 years of age and a large proportion had been in a placement for over 2 years, with a number being placed with the child's family. One of the main areas that Trafford struggled was the placement of sibling groups so in those cases Trafford had to go out to the private foster care providers.

Benchmarking had been conducted with other local authorities and Trafford's level of approvals of foster carers did appear to be lower than the other respondents. Although work needed to be done to see whether other authorities included placements within families, as Trafford excluded those placements from their data.

Following the overview, Councillor Maitland asked whether Trafford had looked further afield than just Greater Manchester for ideas of how to improve recruitment and retention. The Corporate Director for Children's Services responded that the service had worked with Trafford Housing Trust to look at work being done nationally to identify areas of best practice. Other Local Authorities across Greater Manchester were keen in seeing the outcome of this work, with a view to possibly adopting it.

Councillor Dillon asked how the decision on where a child would be placed was made. The Corporate Director of Children's Services went through the selection criteria that was part of the council's rigorous selection process and the Committee were assured the allocation of placements was needs led.

Councillor Acton noted foster caring represented a reduced cost compared to other forms of provision. Councillor Acton expressed his disappointment that Trafford was one of the lowest performing authorities when it came to recruitment and urged the need to find out why. The Corporate Director for Children's Services responded that the recruitment rate was below where they wanted to be. Trafford had aimed to recruit 15 during the year but had only recruited 4 so far with 4 more being trained.

Councillor Acton asked whether putting additional resources into the foster carer service to provide the support they needed would lead to overall savings. The Corporate Director of Children's Services agreed that it was an area where the Council could invest to save. The Corporate Director then informed the Committee of the support offered to foster carers and the plans to enhance the offer.

Councillor New spoke about the advertisements for foster carers and how she felt they were not realistic enough and failed to recognise the pressures that they are likely to face. The Corporate Director for Children's Services spoke of the way foster caring had changed over the years to the point where service mainly needed foster carers who could look after older children and sibling groups. The change in the demographic of children in care had led to foster carers needing higher levels of emotional resilience and skills.

Councillor Maitland asked how many children were placed with internal foster carers and how many were placed with external foster carers. The Corporate Director of Children's Services responded that Trafford had 372 children in care 101 were placed with internal foster carers, 113 were living with family members,

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and 75 were living with parents. 32 were placed with independent foster agencies but while it was more expensive than internal provision it was as high as external residential placements.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

**33. HEALTHY WEIGHT AMONG CHILDREN**

The number of overweight children in the borough was very high and there was no strong evidence base to support what worked to help children lose weight. A number of schemes were being run nationally which would give good data, unfortunately that information was not yet available. While there was a lot of data on the impact of exercise, behaviour, and diet for adults there was not similar data available for children.

The Committee were informed of the schemes Trafford were undertaking which included working together with Foundation 92 to reach primary schools children and their families to talk about wellbeing and mental health. A more specific programme advising on food, mental health and self-esteem was due to start in April. Trafford were also in contact with Tameside Council, who were running one of the national pilot schemes, to share their data.

The Committee were informed of the work within Trafford being done around the delivery of the Healthy Weight strategy and in light of economic factors, such as increased food and energy prices. The food standards agency was looking to pilot schemes with environmental health teams across the country to ensure food standards were being met within schools and Trafford hoped to be selected.

Councillor Young asked whether it was known which areas children were overweight so that resources could be focused upon young people in those areas. The Public Health Programme Manager responded that it was known in Trafford where obesity was more prevalent and it was possible to focus work in those areas.

Councillor New spoke about the role of parents and the importance of having parents who were able to cook. The Public Health Programme Manager responded that the family programme being run by Foundation 92 took a whole family approach to address childhood obesity.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**34. SCHOOL FUNDING**

RESOLVED: That the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting commenced at 6.45 p.m. and finished at 8.43 p.m.

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**TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** July 2022  
**Report of:** Jill McGregor – Corporate Director Children’s Services

**Report Title**

Update on Children’s Services’ Improvement Activity

**Summary**

This report provides an update on the progress of improvement activity within Children’s Services since the last report presented to Committee in February 2022.

The report details the actions and progress that has been made following the formal Monitoring Visit by Ofsted, on 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and some of the key activity and advancement of our Ambitions Plan.

**Recommendation(s)**

- To note the contents of this report and the work that has been progressed to date.
- To agree to receive further updates
- To offer scrutiny and challenge to the service.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

**Name:** Jill McGregor  
**Extension:** 2365

**Background Papers:**

Ofsted Monitoring Visit – Published Letter  
Previous Report to Committee – February 22  
Social Care Self-Assessment

*Please specify whether the content of the report relates to any of the following areas. If the report does not relate to an area just put N/A.*

Corporate Priorities	N/A
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	GM Child and Young People’s Plan
Finance	N/A

Legal	N/A
Equality/Diversity	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Carbon Reduction	N/A
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management	N/A
Risk Management	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A

### **Recap on Inspection Activity**

Since Trafford Children's Services full Inspection under the *Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services Framework* (ILACS) in 2019, there have been 4 Monitoring Visits and a Focus Visit (considering our response to the pandemic):

**October 2019** – First monitoring visit (with a focus on the Front Door)

**March 2020** – 2<sup>nd</sup> monitoring visit cancelled due to the pandemic

**February 2021** – Covid Assurance Focussed Visit that considered all aspects of CSC delivery and included an Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) for Education

**September 2021** – Monitoring visit that considered children in need of Help and Protection (Child in Need and Child Protection). Inspectors reviewed the progress made in the following areas of concern identified at the last inspection:

- The quality of social work assessment and plans, to ensure that they are effective in meeting the needs of children who are the subject of child protection plans.
- The response to children who go missing, to ensure that return home interviews are completed and records of these contain information that will help reduce risk in future.
- Management oversight at all levels of social work practice with children, to ensure that work is effective and is helping them to achieve better outcomes.
- Senior leaders' understanding of the quality of social work practice, through accurate evaluation of performance information and implementation of an effective quality assurance framework.

**March 2022** – Monitoring visit that Inspectors focused on children in care and ensuring that we were providing effective support to enable them to achieve better outcomes. This was with a similar approach to the previous visit in that inspectors wanted to consider the quality of assessments and plans but through the lens of a Cared for Child and the impact of managers to drive effectiveness.

All our formal assurance activity has included consideration of the quality of leadership and management across the service and corporately. Findings and the ongoing improvement work has been reported regularly to children's Scrutiny and this is the fourth such report to provide an update.

This report will summarise in detail the findings of our most recent monitoring visit

## **Monitoring Visit – March 2022**

As outlined above, the focus of the visit in March 2022 was on the quality of assessments, plans and management oversight of the service delivered to our Cared for Children. Within this there was also consideration as to how the service ensures that permanence plans for these children and young people are progressed in a timely way.

As with all of our monitoring activity, Ofsted consider the impact for children and whether the practice and service offered is ultimately making a difference for the children and families of Trafford.

The methodology for this Monitoring Visit was in line with the ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services) framework.

The whole process of a monitoring visit is over 12 days. The first 10 days are for preparation and also off-site activity for the inspection team where they consider evidence that is submitted. This includes performance data, audits and supporting evidence to outline progress in line with the improvement plan and relevant to the chosen focus area. Days 11 and 12 of the process are with inspectors on site. These 2 days are where inspectors meet with practitioners to discuss children and families and also there is time for them to sample some case records to test their key lines of enquiry.

The key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) for this monitoring visit were:

- The quality of social work assessments and plans, to ensure that they are effective in meeting the needs of children in care.
- The way in which all staff and managers listen to the voices of children in care, to inform individual work and wider service development.
- Management oversight at all levels of social work practice with children in care, to ensure that work is effective and is helping to achieve better outcomes.
- Senior leaders' understanding of the quality of social work practice, through accurate evaluation of performance information and implementation of an effective quality assurance framework.

## **The Findings**

Inspectors found that services for children in Trafford have shown improvements since the inspection in 2019. Children continue to be regularly visited by Social Workers and that practitioners know their children well.

The impact of both the redesign and the start of embedding a new model of practice was noted to have impacted on some practitioners but Ofsted further highlighted that workforce stability was showing early signs of improvement, there remained some turnover of social workers and as a consequence this is still having a detrimental impact, on some children being able to build rapport and meaningful relationships with their social worker. Workforce stability and "Investing in our People" continues to be a priority for the service.

Ofsted commended the strength of the corporate and political commitment to improving services for children in Trafford. They saw that the corporate parenting board invites

feedback from children and receives detailed, well-understood performance reports and that board members appropriately challenge the service as a result. Most pleasing was that they felt that the impact of all of this on our children is starting to be seen.

The self-assessment of the Leadership team was found to be accurate, and the Inspectors continue to be satisfied that all of the appropriate plans were in place to address areas where there is more to do in order to offer children across the service consistently good practice.

### **Quality of Assessments**

The feedback within the scope of looking at the quality of assessments was that there was evidence of some assessments that are comprehensive and carefully consider the needs of children. These were seen to be the most effective assessments as they support creating a clear plan.

Where children are in care proceedings the Inspectors found that these assessments were usually stronger.

Many assessments for children in care were reported to be sufficiently detailed and provided a clear focus for future work with them but some were not updated when circumstances changed which meant planning and decision-making was not based on their current needs.

The practice of having Child Impact Chronologies for every child is the desired goal as these support practitioners in understanding the impact of what life is like for a children rather than being incident focussed. The starting point has been that for any child requiring a child protection conference or a decision to be made at Legal Gateway meetings (to seek agreement that court proceedings are required) must have a Child Impact Chronology. The further roll out of this work is the next priority and there is more to do. As part of the Ambitions plan, there is a plan to roll out this approach to partners to enable them to evidence impact for children and this will help identify support earlier for children and families.

### **Quality of Plans**

The inspectors found evidence that there is targeted strategic work that is reducing delays in planning for specific cohorts of children in care. This is linked to the work around establishing permanence panels to ensure there is a clear strategic overview of the plans for children and driving plans and practice forward so that those children, where it is safe to do so, have a plan of permanence achieved.

Children's wishes and feelings were found to be carefully considered when their care plans are developed and recent targeted work brought about an improvement in progressing permanence plans for some other children, such as those subject of a care order and are placed with their parents where we have seen over a 12% reduction in the numbers of children living with their parents under a care order.

Care planning for some children does take place but it is often reactive following an incident and/or where the placement is at risk of breaking down. Our approach is that care planning has to be regular and purposeful to drive the plan and respond to changing situations for children and their carers in a more proactive way. A care

planning framework has been developed and approved by the Senior Leadership Team. There will be a series of practice learning spaces in order to launch this.

### **Impact of Leadership and Management**

The self-view described by Senior Leaders in context setting for this visit was accurate. Ofsted recognised that there is an effective performance management framework in place and senior leaders are held to account by a well-informed and committed corporate parenting board.

The local authority had recently completed detailed quality assurance work about the quality of visits to children and had started a programme of development work across the service. The impact of this could be seen in the improved quality more recently of some visits to children. They did report that whilst children in care are seen regularly by social workers, some visits to children still lacked purpose, and recognised that changes in social workers have an impact on the quality of relationships some children have with their social workers.

However, whilst Ofsted recognised this progress, they also identified areas for further improvement and strengthening of practice. In particular, there is a continued need to strengthen the consistency of our practice and the oversight and challenge offered through the Independent Reviewing Officer Service. We have commissioned the services of Jan Harworth (Emeritus Professor of Child Welfare, University of Sheffield) to review and develop approaches through systems and practice. A focus of this work will be developing the oversight and challenge of CP chairs and IRO's.

It was reported that most social workers for children in care received regular supervision, and that in meetings with HMIs they described this as helpful and supportive. Supervision of social workers by their managers was noted to be generally child-focused and future actions usually agreed. Often though, actions lacked agreed timescales, and this contributed to a lack of rigour in monitoring the impact of planning on children's outcomes. They recognised that supervision of Practice Managers also happened regularly, and senior leaders provide clear direction about individual children when needed.

There has been a dedicated piece of practice led improvement work on a refreshed supervision framework. There is clearly more to do in terms of building the confidence and skills to meet the standards we have set for ourselves in this. There are plans to work with our Strengthening Practice Partners to work with managers on coaching and mentoring skills and also to support 'how to have a reflective conversation' This will become part of a managers' package of development alongside the corporate offer, the leadership forum and leadership master classes that have already taken place from Strengthening Practice.

### **Progress Since Monitoring Visit**

#### **Cared For Children**

A significant amount of work is currently being progressed under this aspect of Ambition 4 (*Our children will live safely and permanently with a family, wherever it is safe to do so*). In order to accelerate and amplify this work a dedicated service plan has been developed and there is now a new permanent Head of Service leading the service and implementation of the plan.

A key priority is the stabilisation of the workforce and, alongside the new Head of Service, a further 5 social workers will be joining the service through our recent recruitment and student / front line processes over the coming weeks.

The recent development and implementation of a tracker that enables every care experienced young person's circumstances to be seen at an individual level across an agreed number of measures, as well as aggregated level, is enabling the service to implement targeted approaches and strategies e.g. targeting and improving the frequency and quality of keeping in touch and interactions with our 19- 25-year-old care leavers.

This is in turn helping focus on key areas of practice improvement, 'Keeping in Touch', timeliness of pathway plans, reviews. The previously successful methodology of practice led improvement work using the data to target a thematic audit to get understand the quality of practice is being utilised.

In addition, the service has recently implemented a permanence panel. There is now a clear understanding of our cared for children and their journeys to permanence. The first permanence panels have taken place with clear identified children where an alternative to care has been identified through the application of an SGO. Proposals to embed this approach have been agreed at SLT and practitioner learning spaces are planned to support and enable practitioners in developing their practice.

### **Workforce Stability**

Workforce stability remains a priority for the service, and it continues to be routed through Ambition 3 of the improvement plan under the action; 'Creating the Conditions for Practice to Flourish'.

Across the service, there continues to be a higher proportion of agency staff to permanent staff within the service. Whilst the agency rate is still higher than desired, and there is some turnover, 62% of agency work force have been with us for longer than 6 months. This affords a level of stability, and we are continuing to focus on supporting all practitioners and managers in their practice to ensure children receive a consistent service.

A key piece of work in this regard is targeting agency staff to join us on a permanent basis; holding dedicated session on the benefits of permanent employment and working with all staff on how to say goodbye and manage endings in way that limits the impact on children and families. Strategically we have made the decision to offer our Strengthening Practice Programme to all our staff regardless of their employment status on the basis that they are delivering services and interventions to our children and families.

At a regional level work is ongoing to explore the potential opportunities and benefits of developing a bespoke Northwest 'not for profit agency.' There are a number of agency members of staff who have been with the service for longer periods of time which is conversely creating an element of stability. It is important to note that there is a regional and national issue with social work recruitment

The strategic approach to the recruitment and retention of staff is detailed through the Investing in Our People strategy and action plan.

As previously reported to committee, last year we commenced a 3-year programme with our new relational practice partner, Strengthening Practice, which is a crucial element to both our workforce stability and improving the quality of practice. Initially the programme had a focus on the wellbeing and care of staff as they went through a restructure and continued to provide services in the context of the pandemic. However, the programme has now progressed to 'Core Skills element with a clear focus on practice. The first module is 'Strengthening Assessment', and this started on 18 May 2022 with the seminars and then followed by 2-day workshops. The feedback so far has been incredibly positive from practitioners and Strengthening Practice with good attendance and engagement to date. There are 3 more workshops over the next 3 weeks.

The bespoke nature of the programme means that it can be adapted to any emerging themes or areas of focus and work is ongoing with the team to consider how we can incorporate the recent learning from our two published Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews to support embedding the learning into practice across the whole service.

Another significant piece of work is in the development of a Childrens Social Work academy. An academy approach will bring together the multiple strands of work that are already in place and will strengthen our offer to our workforce. Workforce development and opportunities will be a key factor alongside the career pathways into social work and beyond. It is envisaged that a draft proposal will be presented as part of ambition 3 in September.

### **Quality of Practice**

Our strengthened quality assurance arrangements continue to evidence that practice is improving, and this combined with our use of dedicated performance tracking reports is enabling a targeted approach to be adopted where there is greatest need.

Throughout the year, there has been a consistent reduction each quarter in the number of case files where the quality of practice is judged to be inadequate judgements, with an increase in those audits where the practice is considered to be good and also an increase in good judgements in quarters 2 and 4. The area that has improved consistently over the reporting year has been in the assessments of children and families. Planning is starting to see improvements also. It is envisaged that with the focus and support of Strengthening Practice in these key areas, this will continue to improve and then directly link to improved outcomes for children.

### **Self-Assessment & Annual Conversation**

In May, the service had its Annual Conversation with Ofsted. The Annual Conversation is a formal part of inspection activity and helps to inform KLOE's for any inspection activity including the full Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). As part of this process the Services Self-Assessment was updated and was submitted to support the discussion and challenge. In addition to the self-assessment being provided Ofsted also receive published data so this can be reviewed to support the focus of the conversation. This was a positive discussion.

Some areas of focus and interest for Ofsted included:

- Re-referral rates and the level of confidence in respect of decision making and “what we understand about this”.
- The timeliness of social work assessments versus quality of assessments
- The numbers and reduction in Cared for Children in particular teenagers exiting care and whether teenagers exiting care are receiving the support they need
- Stability of the work force and what this means for children – whilst recognising the national challenges in this regard but wanting to understand what our high level of interim (agency staffing) means for our children.

The challenge and any issue arising from the Annual Conversation has been woven into our ongoing improvement work as appropriate.

Some of the areas of focus have been incorporated into the MV that is taking place on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

### **Analysis and Summary of Position to Date**

The external scrutiny that the service have been under during this period has provided formal confirmation that progress is being made, albeit not at the pace at which we would have wanted for a number of well documented reasons.

The Ofsted Monitoring Visit process works as an incredibly helpful tool in our Improvement Journey, and the level of feedback that HMIs provide us with during DCS touch points, and formal meetings with leaders, helps to shape our priorities for the next period, validate our view of where we are at, as well as highlighting areas where more targeted work may be required.

As we move out of the pandemic, and into living with Covid, it is pleasing that the frequency of our Monitoring Visits has now been able to return to that which we should have expected from the start of our journey. As the time of submitting this paper, the service had just received formal notification of the next Monitoring Visit will take place on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July, and the focus for this visit will be the quality and consistency of support and interventions to being on ‘Child In Need’.

Following this visit there will be discussion and consideration as to how many further Monitoring Visits will take place before re-inspection.

### *Background Papers:*



**Feedback Letter MV  
March 2022.pdf**



CSC Self Assessment



CSC Improvement

- Updated May 22.pptActivity Update Feb 2:



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9 May 2022

Jill McGregor  
Corporate Director Children's Services  
Trafford Council  
Trafford Town Hall  
Talbot Road  
Stretford  
M32 0TH

Dear Jill

### **Monitoring visit to Trafford children's services**

This letter summarises the findings of the monitoring visit to Trafford children's services on 10 and 11 March 2022. This was the third monitoring visit since the local authority was judged inadequate in June 2019. During the restrictions in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the local authority was also the subject of a focused visit in March 2021. Her Majesty's inspectors for this visit were Kathryn Grindrod and Lorna Schlechte.

### **Areas covered by the visit**

Inspectors reviewed the progress made in the following areas of concern identified at the last inspection:

- The quality of social work assessments and plans, to ensure that they are effective in meeting the needs of children in care.
- The way in which all staff and managers listen to the voices of children in care, to inform individual work and wider service development.
- Management oversight at all levels of social work practice with children in care, to ensure that work is effective and is helping to achieve better outcomes.
- Senior leaders' understanding of the quality of social work practice, through accurate evaluation of performance information and implementation of an effective quality assurance framework.

This visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework.

### **Headline findings**

Services for children in care in Trafford have shown some improvements since the inspection in 2019. Children are regularly visited by social workers, and some assessments and plans for children in care are comprehensive and effective.

Targeted strategic work is reducing delays in planning for specific cohorts of children in care. There is now an effective performance management framework in place and senior leaders are held to account by a well-informed and committed corporate parenting board.

However, the quality of practice with children in care is not consistent, and manager and independent reviewing officers' (IRO) oversight does not always prevent delays in progressing plans for some children. The pace and impact of planned improvements have been slow since the inspection in 2019. These have, in part, been affected by persistently high rates of COVID-19 in the local authority area. Senior leaders are strengthening the base from which they plan to further develop consistently effective practice, as a result of completing a service redesign, rolling out a new practice model and implementing new tracking processes.

### **Findings and evaluation of progress**

Many assessments for children in care are sufficiently detailed and provide a clear focus for future work with them. These assessments include social workers' consideration of children's histories and current circumstances, together with careful analysis that identifies potential risks and needs. However, there remain some assessments that are not as comprehensive, and some are not updated when children's circumstances change. This means that, for some children in care, planning and decision-making is not based on their current needs.

Children's wishes and feelings are usually carefully considered when their care plans are developed. This is particularly true when family-time arrangements are planned. Children's other needs, such as health, education and social or emotional issues, are often not as well detailed in care plans. This can lead to lack of clarity about responsibility for specific actions and makes it difficult to measure progress of plans. As a result, some children do not receive support when they need it, for example, life-story work is sometimes slow to start.

Care plans are not always updated when circumstances change for children. Routine care planning meetings are in the process of being introduced for all children. While they are starting to have an impact, there is still drift and delay in progressing care plans for some children. This is particularly true for children who are voluntarily accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, a small number of whom have seen delays in their permanence plans being secured.

Recent targeted work has seen an improvement in progressing permanence plans for some other children, such as those who are the subject of a care order and are placed with their parents. The discharge of their care orders, when appropriate, means they no longer experience unnecessary statutory intervention.

Children in care are seen regularly by social workers. Some visits to children are purposeful, when social workers analyse what is being seen and heard to properly

understand children's experiences. Some visits to children still lack purpose, and changes in social workers have an impact on the quality of relationships some children have with their social workers. The local authority has recently completed detailed quality assurance work about the quality of visits to children and has started a programme of development work across the service. The impact of this can be seen in the improved quality more recently of some visits to children.

IROs generally know the children they work with well. They make efforts to meet with children prior to their review meetings taking place, to identify their wishes and feelings. Some individual IROs contact children on important occasions, to demonstrate that children are thought of and cared about.

Only half of all children in care attend their review meetings in person. This means that children are not always able to contribute directly to these important meetings about them. The local authority appropriately recognises that children's engagement and participation in their review meetings remains an area for development.

IROs regularly contribute to children's records, through discussions with social workers and managers and at mid-point reviews. However, this is limited and they do not usually set out clear and rigorous scrutiny of children's plans. Instead, they often note agreement to plans without providing a rationale about the appropriateness of planning for the child. IROs do not always challenge other professionals effectively when there is drift in children's care plans progressing.

Most social workers for children in care receive regular supervision, which they describe as helpful and supportive. Supervision of social workers by their managers is generally child-focused and future actions are usually agreed. However, these actions frequently lack agreed timescales, and this contributes to a lack of rigour in monitoring the impact of planning on children's outcomes. This leads to the drift seen for some children, such as those in section 20 accommodation, going unchallenged for longer than necessary.

Supervision of team managers also happens regularly and senior leaders provide clear direction about individual children when needed. Records of supervision sessions do not always contain clear expectations and actions to improve practice with children across teams more generally. As a result, there is variability in the quality of practice across the service, resulting in some children not receiving the right support quickly enough.

Staff describe an unsettled period during the service restructure and the start of embedding a new model of practice. While workforce stability is showing early signs of improvement, there remains some turnover of social workers. This is still having a detrimental impact, on children being able to build rapport with their social worker and on the remaining staff in terms of workload pressures. Social workers say they have felt well supported during this time and feel ready to take the next steps in improving the quality of practice across the service.

There is a strong corporate and political commitment to improving services for children in Trafford. This has been maintained throughout the pandemic, although the pace and impact of strategic improvements has been slow to have an impact on overall practice, in part impacted by COVID-19 rates. The corporate parenting board invites feedback from children and receives detailed, well-understood performance reports. The board members appropriately challenge the service as a result, and the impact of this for children is starting to be seen.

Recently implemented tracking processes are starting to have an impact in preventing drift in planning for some, but not all, children. Performance management and quality assurance processes give leaders an accurate view of the quality of practice, along with areas for improvement. Auditing activity is now more focused on children's experiences and outcomes, leading to actions that better support improvements for children as well as compliance. There is more to do to ensure that actions are fully completed after auditing activity.

I am copying this letter to the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Grindrod  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**



# Trafford Council Self-Assessment 2021/22

Updated May 2022

Director of Children's Services

Lead Member for Children's Services

Chief Executive

# Contextual information

## Key personnel

Role	Name	Time in post	Role	Name	Time in post
<b>Corporate Director of Children’s Services</b>	Jill McGregor	2 yrs 5 mths	<b>Director Education Standards, Quality &amp; Performance</b>	Karen Samples	
<b>Chief Executive</b>	Sara Todd	3 yrs 3 mths	<b>LSCP Chair</b>	Maureen Noble	5 yrs, 7 mths
<b>Deputy Chief Executive</b>	Sara Saleh	4 yrs, 1 mth	<b>Virtual School Head</b>	Lynsey Burridge	8 yrs, 7 mths
<b>Lead Member</b>	Catherine Hynes	3 yrs, 1 mths	<b>Designated Social Care Officer</b>	Sharon Hawkins	0 yrs, 3 mths
<b>Director of Early Help &amp; Social Care</b>	Pamela Wharton	1 yrs, 7 months	<b>Designated Clinical Officer</b>	Sue Thomas	0 yrs, 9 mths

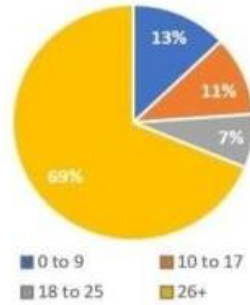
## About the local area and services for children

Please see next infographic slide for a summary of Trafford, our children’s population, and the 2021/22 context.

### Trafford demographics and the 2022 context

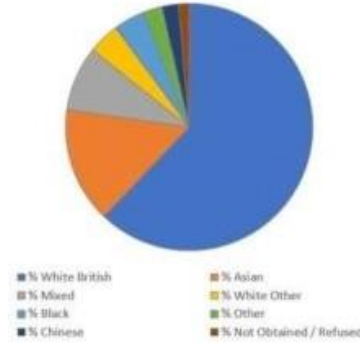
#### Population

The current population of Trafford is estimated at 237,579, broken down below by age. The under-18 population is estimated at 56,626.



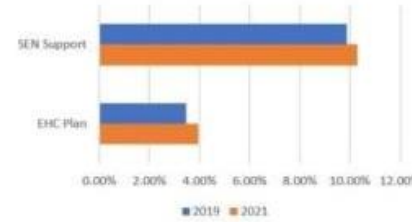
#### Ethnicity

The demographics of the borough are changing with an increasingly diverse population:



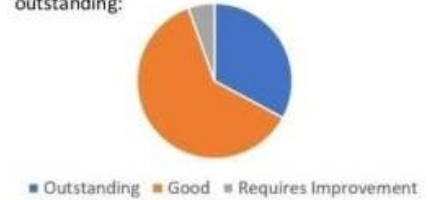
#### SEN support and EHC Plans

1667 children and young people require additional support through an EHCP from services across education, health and social care. 4438 children and young people require SEN support. Both areas have seen an increase from 2019 to 2020.



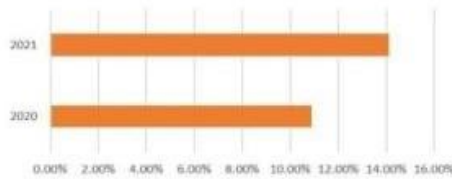
#### School attendance and ratings

We have seen a significant increase in the number of 'in-year' applications for school places. This has been extreme since May 2021, with c800 applications, a very high proportion of which are for pupils who are international new arrivals, predominantly from Hong Kong. The vast majority of Trafford schools continue to be good or outstanding:



#### Free school meals

Trafford is seeing continual term-on-term increases in the number of children eligible for FSM, due in part to both the continuing Universal Credit roll-out and the ongoing fallout of the pandemic.

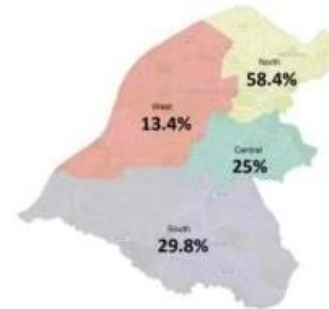


#### Deprivation

IMD (IDACI) 2019 gives Trafford an 'average score' of 16.088, and from that a 'rank of average score' of 118 (out of 151 upper-tier local authorities) where 1 is the most relatively deprived area. However, levels of deprivation are variable across the borough with areas of Bucklow St Martins in west, Clifford in north neighbourhoods, St Marys and Sale Moor in central containing LSOAs in the 10% most relatively deprived in the country and where there are high levels of need. These areas often sit geographically next to areas that are amongst the very least relatively deprived.

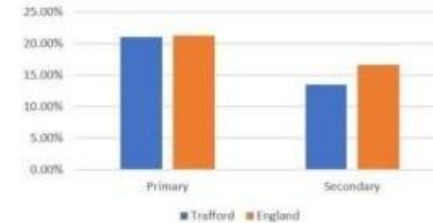
#### Young people with BAME heritage

The proportion of children and young people with BAME heritage varies significantly in different parts of the borough, with the highest concentration in the north.



#### First language other than English

The proportion of pupils with first language other than English is increasing but remains below the average for England:



14%

Living in relative poverty

63.5%

Breastfed at 6-8 weeks

26%

5 year olds with active tooth decay

74.7%

Achieving a 'Good Level of Development' at EYFSP

77%

Achieving expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths, KS2

59.2%

Attainment 8 score

83.3%

Achieving 9-4 in both English and Maths, KS4

2.4%

16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training

# Summary: Children's Social Care

## What have we delivered?

- Full service redesign went live 4 October 2021. This created dedicated Practice Managers & Heads of Service roles within clearly defined service areas. The redesign has been a significant feature of our work over the last year and has involved co-designing our revised arrangements with the workforce, partner agencies underpinned by a set of practice principles. This has provided a cornerstone to our culture change
- Maintained forensic focus on our workforce and through our Investing in Our People Strategy we are starting to create the conditions & circumstances for good practice to flourish. Key aspects of this have included establishing & rolling out a 3 year programme of Strengthening Practice; having a dedicated & revised ASYE offer; a second supported year in practice programme & a bespoke leadership & management programme – 78% of managers attended the first masterclass last month
- In November 2021, engaged with 750 practitioners & partners in Practice Fortnight, with 25 separate learning and development sessions being delivered and many of the sessions being co-delivered by practitioners and front line managers. This evidences our strengthened learning culture across the whole service
- We have recruited to and established a new senior leadership team and through our fortnightly Leadership Forum we are starting to see more distributed leadership – with managers at every level starting to influence practice.
- Our revised and enhanced Quality Assurance Framework has become embedded making QA everyone's business and we are starting to see this influence practice on the ground. We have extended this to have strong multi-agency processes.
- Strengthened Children's Governance across the whole system; including strengthened TSSP & Early Help arrangements and our safeguarding effectiveness sub group is driving improvement across the partnership.
- Established an integrated front door with GMP & specialist expertise including DA advisor & specialist education role that has improved decision making & information sharing at the point of first contact.
- Continued to develop & enhance our Early Help model – rolling out Trafford Team Together and building on our community engagement work to co-design our Family Hubs. This will help and support our co-ordinated approach to helping families at an early stage, which remains a priority.
- Developed our approach to permanence planning and using our data intelligently & with a targeted approach we are reducing drift & delay for our children e.g. through our discharge project we have reduced the number of children placed with their parents by 12% - lowest number for 5 years – Currently 68 children, 85 at its highest.
- Continued to progress with our Improvement Plans delivering against our 8 Ambitions throughout the pandemic and starting to see progress

## What difference have we made?

- Achieving work force stability continues to be a priority and we are starting to make progress – and have a clear management structure in place to support our practitioners and provide a clear line of sight to practice. We currently only have 1 management post that is vacant. This is supporting more consistent decision making and practice; our audits are evidencing 11% increase in “good management grip”
- 154 children have been supported through our Trafford Team Together meaning children and families are getting the help they need at an early stage.
- Our integrated front door is making a difference - timeliness of decision making remains strong. We have seen a 15% increase in the timeliness of decision-making at this point and re-referral rates have in the main stabilised between 19 -21% (although we have seen a recent spike). This is from our high of 2019 of 30%. Our live audit processes have provided assurance about the appropriateness of our decision making at this point
- The quality of assessments & interventions is improving and our use of child impact chronologies is ensuring we understand children's histories to inform plans, especially for our most vulnerable e.g. within our care proceedings 18 children's final care plans have concluded under a Supervision Order in line with the agreed plan
- We are reducing drift and delay for our children – 12% reduction in the number of children placed with parents and 22 SGO have been granted this year achieving permanence for our children.
- Our children continue to live in stable placements and educational outcomes for children in care remain strong
- Our strengthened management grip is starting to influence practice – having sustained a high volume of audits - 420 audits completed 21/22 our QA work is being applied in practice 79% of audits graded RI or better in Quarter 3, which is an increase from Q2
- Our Improvement Plan has been refreshed as we have been able to move to the next stage of 'embedding' rather than 'developing'



# Summary: Children's Social Care

## What have been our challenges?

- Over the last year we have continued to experience persistently high rates of Covid. However strengthened processes and liaison with schools has helped mitigate against this
- Partner agencies have needed to operate alternative delivery models during Covid and this has resulted in fluctuations in demand and presenting need. We have adapted processes such as information sharing in respect of babies under 1 that are currently open to CSC with Health Visiting services. Our roll out of Trafford Team Together has assisted with offering a more co-ordinated offer of Early Help in and around schools.
- Our mental health service (CAMHS) and a third sector provider have needed to operate a clinical prioritisation model at a time when demand is increasing, with an increase of 23% of referrals to CAMHS in 21/22 compared with 20/21. This has been further compounded by increasing complexity e.g. 11% increase in urgent referrals that have required an immediate response.
- The volume of domestic abuse incidents continues to be a pressure but through our revised MARAC arrangements and co-located services, decision making is timely.
- Workforce instability and an over reliance on agency staffing has continued to be a challenge throughout the year and our service redesign has impacted on this further.
- Children are experiencing too many changes in social worker (33%) and this affects the quality of relationships and the impact for the child, but for some children it is clear practitioners have been creative and persistent to build trust. Our "proactive pick up" is helping to minimise disruption when case work moves across different teams
- In the earlier part of the year we needed to stabilise and support our Children with Additional Needs Service – using a dedicated project approach. We have systematically worked through challenge clinics and needing to reassess children and families in line with risk and need.

## What do we still need to do?

- Continue to implement our 'Investing In Our People' Strategy and achieve workforce stability to further reduce reliance on agency staff and strengthen our staff retention to ensure children can form meaningful consistent relationships with practitioners.
- Our practice continues to be "variable" but we are seeing improvements. We have clear plans for targeted improvement & accelerating pace using a targeted approach and maximising our data tracking processes e.g. continuing to strengthen the oversight and progression of plans for children who are s.20 ; single plan approach to children who are missing.
- Continue to strength enhance our family help offer - 'right service, right time right professional' by embedding TTT across the whole borough and implement a redesign of our Hubs and IFS to ensure there is a cohesive family help strategy.
- Numbers of EHA assessment remains low and whilst we have confidence in our application of thresholds we want to ensure there is responsive multi-agency offer of help for all – we will continue to progress this through our Early Help Board and the work of TSSP.
- Continue to develop our managers as system leaders – leadership with influence programme including external training; strengthening middle management remains a key priority but our audit activity is evidencing enhanced grip. Management grip increased to Good in 41% of cases from 29% in Quarter 1.
- Implement the whole system work in respect of strength-based planning and elevate the IRO and CP Chairs and influence as system leaders to prevent drift and delay and improve outcomes for children.
- Working with our Community Safety Partnership we are developing our approach to reducing violent crime by children through a menu of prevention & targeted approaches. This is as part of a coordinated and direct response to 3 fatalities within the last 2 years.

# Children's Social Care: Early Help

## What have we delivered?

- Continued to develop & prototype a new approach to Early Help Services. This has included redesign of the Front Door, to be a reach out model and reconnecting to the community. This is helping us to address the low number of contacts that progress to referrals and is providing the platform for strengthening the support offered through community based help
- Implemented and tested our Team Around Model, TTT, across 8 schools in 2 localities & achieved partnership buy-in for the TTT approach with partners holding & supporting families. Its proactive and preventative approach is leading to multi-agency teams become community based & focusing on the holistic needs of families. 14 additional schools now fully engaged and have met with their TTT coordinator alongside 10 more schools who are being brought on board .
- Our third sector partners established a steering group to support the delivery of co-ordinated help & support for children and families and this is ensuring their collective buy in and ownership of our family help agenda
- Continued to deliver EH services during the pandemic & recognised where there has been greatest need e.g. delivering a targeted baby massage for parents identified as being in need/isolated by health visitors and the delivery of bespoke parenting programmes for "COVID babies"
- Continued to support vulnerable families through Trafford Assist & the provision of free school meal vouchers during school holidays & the role of our community hubs that have been inclusive of EH workers & provided specific delivery in line with need e.g. Partington Community Hub has supported to put on play sessions and mental health support groups for children. Safeguarding training was delivered to all our Hubs to support the community by being the "eyes and ears" during lockdown.
- Maintained clear line of sight on under 5s through support and tracking within Early Years Sector and we have strengthened and re- shaped our 0-5 Board (Better Beginnings Board) to strengthen ownership & respond to emerging need post pandemic.
- Rolled out Reducing Parental Conflict programme as part of our early response to couple conflict & our menu of Domestic Abuse support - 21 champions have been trained & supported across the partnership & we are moving into delivery phase, with clear ownership by the partnership through RPC Multi-Agency Steering Group; in line with the increased prevalence of couple conflict ( s.7s and 37s and DA).
- Increased commissioned service offer for young people with emotional wellbeing mental health difficulties – including the extending the commissioning of our KOOTH services to young people up to the age of 25 years during the pandemic.
- Reviewed operating model & service delivery for Intensive Family Support Service – new Head of Service & dedicated action plan to ensure that those families on the edge of social care receive intervention

## What difference have we made?

- 154 children have been supported through our Trafford Team Together meaning children and families are getting the help they need at an early stage. Our evaluation of this approach has been extremely positive and has been reflected in parental and partner agency feedback
- *"H is so excited to come to the activities you introduced her to that her mum says she is now like a different child... Mum is also extremely grateful to you and your service for encouraging the child to engage with you. Her confidence and self esteem is certainly growing. You're also enabling her to be a child again and forget adult troubles"*
- *"Every meeting I have attended has ended with a strong plan for families and good communication between Trafford agencies you wouldn't have been able to access otherwise."* (TTT Partner)
- We have strong grip and line of sight for those families who are receiving help and support via IFS and through a dedicated action plan we are strengthening the practice in this service. This is reducing the families that are passing between this service and CSC. This has been assisted by bringing these two parts of the service under a single leadership structure .
- Our HV teams are currently working with 968 families who are above universal level of support but below safeguarding thresholds and we are actively working with the service to ensure this is better reflected and understood through the use of EHA and within the context of TTT
- We have had strong engagement with our young people 2,723 engagements with young people by detached youth service (Jan 21–Dec 21) ensuring that they are helped and supported in line with need. This is inclusive of our young parents with 1,159 engagements from Talkshop with our young parents and pregnant teenagers.
- Our pro-active approach to tackling NEET for all young people is having success
- Young people have been supported through enhanced Kooth offer and we have responded to our young people saying this was a priority.
- Whilst our MH services have been under pressure linked to increased demand – 643 young people received an urgent response within 1-3 week target timescale.
- Our adapted delivery of parenting courses, and commissioning of online courses has enabled parents to be supported when access to support was compromised during the pandemic.

# Children's Social Care: Early Help

## What have been our challenges?

- Roll out of Trafford Team Together Model was impacted by COVID & children being out of school, but this has now picked up pace.
- Some partner agencies have been operating with surge plans in place resulted in varied demand and some pinch points.
- Current H/V and school nursing service has been subject to a review and new model is now being implemented – delayed due to vaccination programme. A further challenge is the lack of Electronic Patient Records for MFT services. This is impacting on performance reporting for our young children. Our OH commissioners are currently working with MFT to provide up to date assurance in respect of current delivery.
- Stakeholders completing Early Help assessments remain low (484 at end of year) but this is being picked up through the work within the TTT model & Early Help Board.
- Increase in parental conflict/relationship distress – tipping into family court processes & statutory involvement.
- Increase demand for mental health support as demonstrated through CAMHS monthly and quarterly reporting.

## What do we still need to do?

- Implement a co-designed phase 2 of the redesign - Trafford Team Together will now be rolled out across the borough and this in line with the transformation of Early Help Hubs into Family Hubs and the re- shaping of our IFS will further strengthen our co-ordinated offer of family help .
- Implement an agreed partnership outcomes framework that is based on a shared ownership of demand and need including increasing the number of EHA and GP2 competed by partner agencies.
- Continue to progress MA audit and quality assurance processes to provide assurance and challenge in respect of our collective practice.
- Review our EH Commissioned offer – based on our strategic needs assessment and maximising the work of the provider collaborative to ensure sustainability.
- Our commissioned MH services have benefitted from enhanced funding e.g. 8 MH practitioners are currently being recruited. The impact of this in line with need and demand will need to be reviewed.

# Children's Social Care: Front Door

## What have we delivered?

- Redesigned our Front Door service (First Response) increasing the number of s/w at this critical decision making point, with 5 non case holding s/w being located in the front door to further strengthen screening and referral processes in line with our relational practice model. Social workers are actively involved in talking to our referrers to improve the quality of information and build confidence and capacity across the partnership . This is ensuring children's needs and the worries referrers have are understood and collective next steps are agreed in a timely way.
- Responded to fluctuations in demand at the contact and referral stage through the use of our contain funding to support an additional 2 social work posts in the front door. The impact of this is currently being reviewed as part of the re-design of IFS to ensure that we are making best use of use resource to meet need.
- The partnership roles within the front door have been further strengthened by integration with GMP, enabling police & social workers to make joint decisions and through dedicated specialist posts, including a dedicated schools advisor & the mainstreaming of our Domestic Abuse advisor, who assists in the screening of DA referrals alongside the police, promoting preventative practice across early help and support as well as the integration of the Reducing Parental Conflict model.
- Maintained & sustained strong working arrangements with schools and established liaison meetings with police and school leads
- The role of our schools advisor has been influential in having a clear line of sight on those pupils that schools have been worried about during the pandemic. Our schools advisor and virtual head play a key role in our cross service approach to children at risk of missing out on education and are members of the CARME group
- Continued to strengthen QA system and processes at front door – live audit programme in place and learning being cascaded across the partnership. This work has fed into a dedicated action plan and is currently being used in our locality "Level of Needs" Events that have been attended by 84 practitioners to date.
- Secured contain monies to pilot SPOA in respect of mental health referrals to ensure whole system response
- Reviewed & strengthened MARAC arrangements (increased frequency and improved partnership attendance) as well as having daily triage meetings.
- Used our JSNA of DA to align resources e.g. commissioned bespoke support for children experiencing Domestic Abuse.
- Successfully implemented DSL pilot to 8 schools to be confident in their decision making and supporting children and families, and are in the process of mainstreaming the approach and offer to more schools.

## What difference have we made?

- Decision making at the point of referral and contacts is timely – meaning help and support is being offered in line with need and avoiding drift and delay. Our data shows that the timeliness of decision making on police referrals since the co-location has increased by 15%; this is despite an increase in contacts generally from all agencies and staffing challenges within First Response
- For the majority of the year there has been a stabilisation of our re-referral rate ranging between 19-21%, aligned with statistical neighbours. Our most recent data has shown a spike and increase to 23% however through our strengthened QA activity we have solid understanding of the reasons for this.
- Our strengthened QA processes are ensuring that confidence and shared understanding about issues at the front door are owned and we have assurance about decision making e.g. our live audit work has confirmed right decisions being made with regards to level of support but the quality of referral information from some partner agencies needed strengthening. A dedicated plan has been put in place and examples of partnership response to this work include Chief Nurse working with our PCN network to improve the quality of referrals from GP's and cascade of audit finding to schools through our Improvement Board schools reps and the DSL networks.
- Representatives from the service have attended forums to offer partners the opportunity to spend time at the Front Door, shadowing, looking at the referral process and how screening process happens. This has developed a stronger shared understanding and confidence in respect of decision making.
- Attendance and decision making at strategy meetings is good – Thematic S47 audit in Sept 21 evidenced that the vast majority of strategy meetings considered were timely, showed appropriate threshold application and were well attended.
- Successfully managed the fluctuations in referrals and demand through Covid – highest points of 850 referrals to lowest points (summer) of c500. This has meant that we are confident children and families' needs are being considered.
- Our schools are engaged in and attending MARAC meetings and this in conjunction with our Operation Encompass means we have strong information sharing in respect of DA in a timely way. This is helping us provide individual support for children.

# Children's Social Care: Front Door

## What have been our challenges?

- Increase in complexity and prevalence of Domestic Abuse incidents. MARAC is now taking place weekly with on average 20 families discussed. This is reflective of the increased complexity and severity of issues.
- High number of strategy meetings that do not require an ICPC - but we have undertaken assurance in regard of this through end to end review.
- Internal changes within Greater Manchester Police meant it took longer to realise our integrated front door and joint decision making.
- Volatility in demand at the Front Door has meant we have needed to continuously respond to changes and check our resource deployment alongside redesign of services
- Instability across the health landscape with through ICS and some localised staffing changes within community health and delivery of surge and vaccination programme has meant a gap with a health professional at the Front Door for a significant period of time.
- Collective understanding of EH activity that is not being captured through EHA numbers to ensure an effective offer of support is being provided.
- A low percentage of contacts into the Front Door convert to referral (around 23% at end of Q4).

## What do we still need to do?

- Continue to embed shared understanding and application of levels of needs, the shared understanding of 'right help right time" and reduce the number of contacts & assessments that do not require social care intervention whilst ensuring a partnership response.
- Implement all aspects of our co-ordinated Family Help model – Family Hubs, roll out of TTT across the borough, revised IFS model.
- Continue to implement systematic learning across the partnership based on our QA processes e.g focus on re-referrals to understand the reason for a recent increase.
- Formally review the revised front door arrangements to measure impact, for example understand the impact that the DA post is having in terms of reducing high level domestic abuse cases being referred into First Response and a lower-level intervention across Trafford families.
- Progress our partnership in respect of system responses to babies and young children to understand whether there is an issue with late identification of issues with this cohort and inform further service transformation,

# Children's Social Care: Help & Protection

## What have we delivered?

- Created dedicated Families First for CIN & Support & Protection service with dedicated Heads of Service to raise the status of CIN work & maintain a focus of CP planning
- Timeliness of assessments has dipped as these arrangements have gone live with a particular drop in December following transition. More recently this figure has improved and there has been a focus on quality as new arrangements are embedding. We have undertaken audits and Head of Service moderations to test out this hypothesis – 13% increase in the number of assessment judged to be good in the last period.
- Children are routinely seen & engaged as part of the assessment (94%); this coupled with our use of Child Impact Chronologies (CimC) is ensuring that what life is like for children is influencing plans. This is starting to be reflected in the improving quality of plans for children – 41% of audited plans were judged to be good.
- Implemented a partnership action plan including use external expertise (Professor Jan Horwarth) to improve CP practice, processes & decision making. Through this work we have seen changes to the duration of CP plans (more plans over 1 year+) to ensure decision making is based on sustainable change, however the number of children subject to repeat plans continues to be an area of focus.
- Redesigned & rolled out strengthened PLO systems & processes including a toolkit to support practice; tracking & better grip is supporting plans progress to permanence e.g. since May no care proceedings concluded with full care order & placed at home.
- QA work has identified that we proportionally have high a number of recurrent care proceedings (12% of care proceedings issued in 2021) & we are progressing a different approach & way of working for these families.
- CimCs are being embedded as essential requirement for ICPCs & PLO & this is ensuring that children's histories are being considered in planning & interventions.
- Continued focus on the need to visit children and for visits to be purposeful as well as timely. Dip sample audit work is evidencing improved quality but we have seen some fluctuations in timeliness.
- Starting to have a focus on core groups as vehicle to drive forward planning for children – with a dedicated plan to raise the status and quality of core group activity including reconfiguring our electronic recording system.
- Continued focus on partnership approach to safeguarding e.g. progressing whole system approach to tackling Neglect and DA abuse under Ambitions plan & TSSP e.g. DSL are now consistently attending MARAC ensuring that children's needs are fully considered within this process. This coupled with operation Encompass continues to strengthen multi-agency working between Children Social Care and education to ensure that plans are adjusted in school setting (as evidenced through MA audit).
- Rolled the enhanced roll of the Virtual Head to Children in Need and those that have

## What difference have we made?

- Evidence of better application of thresholds – balance of work has changed with an increase in CP figures and stabilisation of children in care. We have used our QA systems to tackle this issue. CP plans are now standing at 202 which is an increase from 176 in quarter 1.
- Improved working with schools led to head teachers driving forward sense check of our joint working, through a head teacher's survey & associated action plan and our DLS forums.
- Findings from MA DA Audit have been converted into action plan & led to series of roundtable events. An outcome from this work has been to secure resource and implement two perpetrator programmes across Trafford.
- Findings from MA Neglect Audit led to action plan & Neglect Conference which has raised the status of tackling neglect for all children. Neglect Conference was attended by 188 practitioners; agencies being asked to develop their "call to action" plans. Within social care our response has included all practitioners having bespoke training in working effectively where DA is an issue through our Core Skills Programme,
- Where we are using CimCs we are making a difference e.g. recent case in Court where the judge stated the Child Impact Chronology supported the evidence to demonstrate impact that helped make the best decision for the child. 87% cases presented to legal gateway in quarter 3 had a CimC
- Continue to have strong multi-agency engagement in strategy meetings
- Through our strengthened pre-proceedings we are making the right plans for children and progressing these in a more timely way. 10 children within care proceedings currently have a plan of adoption as a consequence of stronger grip and planning for permanence; previously we have seen low performance in terms of the number of adoptions.

# Children's Social Care: Help & Protection

## What have been our challenges?

- Roll out of new early approaches is having impact but also identifying some unmet need
- Increase in CIN work – creating potential pressures in the system. Not solely down to COVID, we needed to change plans for some children that were previously helped by our Intensive Family Support Service.
- Emerging and increased need for children and young people with MH and emotional difficulties
- Children in need are over represented in absence figures – but we are doing something about this through the work of our Virtual Head and EVC service.
- Impact of COVID on relationship distress and contested arrangements increasing court led decisions - 17% (of total number of care proceedings) where ICO was issued was as a result of private law proceedings.
- Staffing challenges including business support have impacted on the timeliness of Conferences and CP review. A service plan is in place to address these issues.
- Continue to experience a high rate of CP plans that are plans for a second and subsequent time. We have taken action to reduce this but it remains an issue - 17% of those children becoming subject of a CP plan in last 6 months (Oct – March) have had one previously, 13% had had one in the last 2 years.
- Challenges within the judicial system means we are seeing delays in securing court outcomes for our children. 54% of our care proceedings are over 26 week threshold and this is impacting on planning. However for 3 children the SHOPBA decision is now being revoked and SGOs are being sought by their foster carers as a consequence of caring for these children over an extended period.

## What do we still need to do?

- Continue to respond to and manage fluctuations in demand at a time of whole system staffing challenges.
- Continue to quality assure child & family assessment in light of deteriorating performance in terms of timescales to ensure that any delay is offset by completion of a quality and meaningful assessment without gaps.
- Roll out codesign revised CP plans and processes with our children and families following the completion of our work with Jan Horwarth – this will ensure that our plans are strength based and sustainable .
- Continue with end to end review of decision making across CP system with partners to iron out anomalies – low s47 conversion rate; high repeat CP planning
- Closely monitor timescales and quality of child & family assessments through thematic audits, to ensure that the decrease in timeliness remains down to focus on quality and is not indicative of another issue.
- Review the impact of strengthened Legal Gateway and PLO processes – we are seeing positive impact from this work.
- Engage with and deliver Recurrent Care project – we have a cohort of parents that experience repeat removals (12%) & our audit work identifies that we need to strengthen this.
- Strengthen the quality of assessment and planning with the Complex Needs team - we have stabilised staffing and now need to focus on quality .

# Children's Social Care: Vulnerable Adolescents

## What have we delivered?

- Established dedicated service for Vulnerable Adolescents that brings together MFH team & CSE Mentor with SHINE ( exploitation team) & Trafford Youth Justice for young people who are vulnerable & may be at risk of exploitation, missing or involved in youth justice services. We increased the s/w resource to our specialist exploitation team by 50%
- Refreshed Exploitation Strategy across the partnership in line with this revised approach
- Developed an integrated offer with commissioned substance misuse service in line with our JSNA. Youth Engagement workers have received training the ACT methodology – applying the approach in practice
- Secured and embedded Health resource within our multi disciplinary complex safeguarding team (Shine) and is working across YJS .
- Maintained strong governance & operation oversight for children who are missing or exploited - Monthly MFH Steering group, Complex Safeguarding Panel & DCS Performance meetings - know we have more to do to strengthen our response to those who go missing.
- Revised our referral pathway and recording for children who are OOA and missing.
- Continue to enhance our prevention offer for vulnerable adolescents through peer mentoring scheme for young people at risk of being engaged in knife crime; work with the third sector to implement a whole family mentoring programme; multi- agency allocation panel across YJ and missing services This is being further developed through a partnership Violence reduction strategy.
- Strengthened support within our schools e.g. established liaison meeting with one of special schools to respond preventatively; continued to roll out bespoke violent reduction programmes to our schools
- Continued to roll out support to all workers across the workforce e.g. offering case consultations and formulations through trusted relationships psychologist & joint supervision for case of exploitation held outside of SHINE service.
- Strengthened our Education offer in Youth Justice service – dedicated EET post that has already resulted in an improved EET rate for post 16 YP (60% in Education, Employment or Training at end of Q4).
- Continued to strengthen MFH processes (In response to high proportion of MFH reports being for young people in Children's Homes) with dedicated sessions being offered to young people in our children's homes including activity based session to support the development & engagement with workers and reduce missing episodes.
- Held dedicated training sessions for Corporate Parenting Board; members asked for this ensuring corporate ownership of the issue. Members regularly meet with GMP colleagues in area of highest crime by young people

## What difference have we made?

- The new service arrangements have resulted in a more co-ordinated approach to our adolescents that have vulnerabilities. We are further strengthening this practice-led approach & information sharing to ensure risk is understood & plans reflect this.
- We have worked directly with our young people to share understanding as to why adults are concerned when they are missing. This has been supported through revised recording systems and bespoke approaches to RHI - e.g. a high number of young people reporting that they did not regard themselves as 'missing' in return interviews led to revised prevention approach as to why adults might be worried.
- Our prevention approaches within the YJS are having an impact e.g. reduction in FTE's in the criminal justice system; offences down from 118 to 92 from 19/20 to 20/21 & lowest ever custody rate of 0.08 for 2020/21.
- A strong health offer is in place for young people including dedicated speech and language support based within the YJS and working into our youth support service. Serious Youth Violence mentoring programme is helping address knife crime; 50 young people have been supported to date (and the scheme is currently working with 27 yp) 11 permanent exclusions have been avoided and only 3 participants have offended, all of which have been for non-violent offences .
- 83% of the YP involved in knife crime mentoring programme did not go on to commit a crime & 97.5% are not engaged in employment, education or training.
- Through the adoption of a dedicated partnership, disruption in one locality using multi agency briefings to address hotspot areas & plan disruption activity across police, social care, education, community safety & housing, we have achieved a reduction in ASB and crime in that locality.
- Our specialist Exploitation Team is making a difference to young people through the building of trusted relationships and interventions e.g. 100% of the young people closed to the Shine service last quarter have been reintroduced to Education and their missing episodes had reduced.
- We have mobilised a whole system approach to reducing violent crime in response to recent fatalities.



# Children's Social Care: Vulnerable Adolescents

## What have been our challenges?

- Single view of risk & risk management approach – more to do to be needs-led not service-led
- Securing Health resource for the Shine service has taken longer than anticipated – but it is now in place
- Moving from dedicated parenting worker to commissioned service – not quite there yet!
- Too many panels / meetings across the system – need to have better alignment
- Increase in the *number of* more young people going missing (although fewer times). A small number of young people account for a disproportionate number of our Missing from Home episodes. This is impacting on our the number of RHI being recorded as offered and accepted.
- The performance of commissioned out of area RHI has needed to be an area of focus.

## What do we still need to do?

- Embed multi-agency audit & learning for children who are missing & become data intelligent. Thematic audit has taken place looking at the cohort of CP who have a disproportionate number of MFH episodes and the learning is being cascaded . Similarly we are rolling out the learning from TSSP audit in respect of missing and exploitation, utilising the quarterly learning and development bulletin, a series of “Learning in to Practice” videos/podcasts, 7 minute briefings and workforce development sessions such as lunch and learns on the SHINE service.
- Strengthen early identification & action of young people at risk of exploitation across the service
- Strengthen our joint work with Catch 22 regarding our young people placed OOB who go MFC to ensure that they receive the same quality support and intervention.
- Strengthen the quality of risk assessments and planning across different services – ‘one child one plan’ approach to risk management
- Develop and embed our strategy to knife and violent crime by children – we are developing & strengthening this as part of response to 3 fatalities within the last 2 years

# Children's Social Care: Care Planning & Achieving Permanence

## What have we delivered?

- Developed and are rolling out our principle-led approach to permanence supported by a comprehensive permanence action plan. This is inclusive of a dedicated training and development programme for practitioners to improve the quality and consistency of care planning to reduce drift and delay.
- Developed and implemented a permanence tracker which is being operationalised and used to support practice.
- Through the use of our permanence tracker & applying our principles in practice we are starting to reduce historic drift & delay and achieve permanence for our children and gain traction e.g. we have RAG rated all children living with connected carers in respect of likelihood of securing SGO as a permanent arrangement. Through this approach 8 SGO carers assessments are being progressed as a priority.
- Created a bespoke SGO support team & advice hub & established a dedicated support group for friends and family carers ensuring that practitioners & carers have access to timely expert advice and support. This coupled with use of placement support meetings is helping maintaining placement stability for our children living in such arrangements.
- Revised our approach to planning for permanence through adoption by relocating this work within the Support and Protection service. This means that practitioners who understand children's histories are progressing their permanence plan through to adoption. This is strengthening our early permanence work and we are seeing increased numbers of children with planned outcomes of adoption. There are currently 8 children with SHOPA decisions and 8 children with PO.
- Increased our menu of training & support to carers; Delivered PACE training to compliment Carer Training; Implemented Foster Care mentoring programme
- Created a dedicated Provider Service to focus on Placement Sufficiency for all children and have a dedicated fostering project to strengthen this work e.g. Proactive approach to increasing foster care retention with a focus on recruitment, retention & utilisation e.g. introduced digital marketing campaign; spare room project
- Entered into a partnership with Trafford Housing Trust and Coram to develop bespoke housing solutions to increase sufficiency.
- Reset our No Wrong Door (Kindle) service & secured health commitment on a permanent basis for Life Coach role and speech and language therapist aligning with our in house supported living accommodation. This will help to intervene earlier & offer a whole family approach to our teenagers on the edge of care. Numbers of teenagers entering care remains high.
- Taken a targeted approach to strengthening our care planning. pre-proceedings, discharge project for children placed with parents & those living with friends & family carers as these areas needed greatest traction.

## What difference have we made?

- By having a mixed offer of support to all our carers we have sustained strong placement stability - 77% (137/178) of our cared for children have been in the same placement for 2+ years.
- The number of children living within 20 miles is 4<sup>th</sup> highest nationally. Our children are maintaining friendships and networks locally.
- Only 18 cared for children have been unable to stay at their school this year & no child moved school more than once.
- We have a high proportion of brothers and sisters living together and this is further supported through our use of bespoke family time plans when we have not been able to achieve this. Our family time plans are developed with our children and reflect their wishes and feelings.
- We have fewer children living with their parents under a care having successfully achieved a 12% reduction, the lowest number for 5 years. This means that our children have a less intrusive level of support and intervention and our parents have been supported to successfully care for their children.
- The quality and consistency of CPR has for children with a plan of adoption. This is helping support timely realisation of adoption plans as well as bringing children's stories and histories to life. This has been achieved through a strengthened QA approach, live ADM's and bespoke training.
- A number of foster carers were supported to make applications to the GM Room Makers scheme increasing the number of children they could care for without moving. This is helping support our sufficiency plans
- The number of children living with Special Guardians remains high and we continue to see this as planned outcome for exit out of care - 22 children this year have achieved permanence through this route at the conclusion of care proceedings - our principled approach in action .
- The feedback from our SGO carers about our strengthen advice and support to help decision making is positive. This is helping to ensure that our children will have permanence and addressing our legacy issue.
- Improved the number of our young who remained living with their foster carer having turned 18. 26 children have 'Stayed Put' year to date .
- Our staying close work approach is ensuring our young people exiting residential care have an ongoing offer of support e.g. one young person in secure accommodation is being visited by her key worker and the team are actively contributing to her life story work

# Children's Social Care: Care Planning & Achieving Permanence

## What have been our challenges?

- A number of children have not had their permanence plan formally ratified and whilst this is a legacy issue we are needing to progress this work at pace.
- Increase in number of unaccompanied asylum seekers creating additional pressure in service - currently have 8 young people, with new young people being recorded every month of 2022 to date. This in part has been linked to the national approach. We have developed expertise in our residential homes to create bespoke support for our UASC
- We have continued to face challenges in recruiting foster carers with more carers leaving the service than being recruited. Our challenge in this regard is multi faceted - national sufficiency issues, an ageing carer population; numbers of carers that are for named children only and high numbers of carers that have committed to children on a permanent basis impacting on short term placements.
- Our reset of NWD has taken longer than we had anticipated - securing health commitment to this has been a challenge.
- During the pandemic we have needed to support our carers to be confident and comfortable when making new placements.
- Placement sufficiency for children with complex trauma / mental health needs has been a challenge.

## What do we still need to do?

- Continue to progress our dedicated fostering project in line with our sufficiency strategy
- Strengthen our tracking processes with regards to s.20 placements - this is our next area of focused attention aligned with our strengthened PLO processes and permanence tracking.
- Go live with our NWD reset - June
- Continue to roll out placement support meetings as routine and not only for carers and children where placement stability is an issue
- Reshape our collective offer of support for children experiencing trauma and reduce the use of external placements for these children.

# Children's Social Care: Cared for Children & Care Experienced

## What have we delivered?

- We have brought together our Permanence Teams with the After Care service to support the continuity of approach and embed risk based transitions and support.
- Strengthened oversight and challenge through Corporate Parenting Board – this is providing strong multi agency and corporate oversight and challenge.
- Continued to embed placement support meetings as means for ensuring wrap around approach to placements although the use is still lead by placement instability.
- Implemented a dedicated service plan to strengthen the role & influence of IRO's & whilst we still have more to do we have seen an increase in IRO visits to children in care – including face to face visits & midpoint reviews& IROs writing to children after their reviews. Named IROs link to locality Practice Mangers to support whole service approach to progressing plans.
- We are embedding a whole service approach to care planning meetings as routine and we are starting to see strengthened practice in this regards e.g. rolling out Child's Journey methodology to move plans on when needed – reflecting our multi-agency approach to progressing plans where there is a lack of traction.
- We have strengthen the quality of assessment and planning for children within care proceedings and this monitored through our QA systems and processes, including the roll out of strengthened or dispute resolution processes.
- Developed a dedicated participation plan for cared for children and care experience young people – acting and listening to their voices – areas of focus for our young people have included support for recruitment enhancing life story work.
- Enhanced our health offer to cared for children & care leavers e.g. extended the Kooth online support up to the age of 25 years old.
- Maintained a forensic focus on education and achievement with a clear strategic approach to reducing NEET for our cared children and care experienced – introduced a post 16 PEP co-ordinator; part of the national pilots for PP & introduced post 18 PEP's and a dedicated panel.
- Maximised the role of the Virtual School in supporting our children's health including developing and enhancing play therapy offer.
- Increased the ask of "Keeping in Touch" to a minimum of 8 weekly and following up where not happening taken a targeted approach to keeping in touch with HoS meeting with all After Care workers and social worker individually to agree actions and plans.
- Developed & started to implement new pathway plan within children's recording system to promote timely completion of Pathway plans.
- Continue to develop accommodation options for care experienced young people. Signed up to & progressing the House Project

## What difference have we made?

- Increased the number of care proceedings finalised on Supervision Order – 18 so far to date and those in accordance with our proposed plan. No PwP at conclusion of care proceedings since May 2021. This coupled with our own QA activity evidences we are improving the quality of work in this area.
- 137 children and young people have lived in their current placement for 2+ yrs. 22 children have had 2 or more placement moves (5.8%) meaning children have been afforded stability.
- We are reducing drift and delay for our children through our enhanced understanding and dedicated approach to discharging PWP arrangements and we are achieving this – 12% reduction in the number of children placed with parents and a further 17 awaiting a statement/court date, further 15 identified for discharge.
- Our children in care are supported to achieve within education including providing bespoke led interventions e.g. 85 sessions of therapeutic play completed last academic year for 6 children; dedicated educational psychology support; 31 children within the virtual school accessing bespoke speech language and communication support provided through the virtual school.
- Post-16 PEP completion has increased from 31% in Spring Term 2020 to 94% in Spring Term 2021.
- ETE for our Year 12 and 13 students has increased from 46% in Spring Term 2020 to 85% in Spring Term 2021. This year we had four of our Year 13 pupils completing A-Level qualifications. This is twice as many as in 2020
- Through of use of support plans and understanding of need we have increased the number of our young people who remain with their foster carers – 'Staying Put' (26 for 2021/22 year to date).
- Increased contact with Care Experienced young people 90% & 82% Dec 21 & Jan 22
- Ten of our Care Leavers have undergone extensive training as Peer Mentors and five have now been matched in one-to-one peer mentoring relationships providing young person led support and guidance
- Low numbers of 16-17 year olds reside in unregulated provision (8 young people).
- 97% of 19-21 year olds are in suitable accommodation.

# Children's Social Care: Cared for Children and Care Experienced

## What have been our challenges?

- We needed to change the leadership of this service area, and this has now happened.
- Changing culture and thinking to embed "would this be good enough for my child"
- Delays in the court system has impacted on securing arrangements for children and young people.
- High level of unplanned moves experienced by some children –particularly those that have experienced acute trauma. Placement sufficiency in this regard has resulted in reactive planning and management of risk for a small number of children.
- Independent reviewing officers' (IRO) oversight has not always prevented delays in progressing plans for some children, and this is being addressed through the IRO Improvement Action plan.
- We are still experiencing some staffing instability in this part of the service which is affecting quality and consistency of pathway plans.
- Our electronic recording system in this area of the service has needed reconfiguring – and whilst plans are place to address this, this has hampered progress in respect of the quality of planning.
- Number of Care Experienced young people 19- 21 who are NEET.

## What do we still need to do?

- Continue to roll out our principle led permanence strategy and embed a consistent approach to care planning meetings as routine.
- Refresh and realign our entry to care arrangements and post 16 accommodation panel.
- Approximately half of our Children in Care attend their reviews, and a priority is improving this figure and strengthening the way that young people participate in their reviews by embedding different ways of holding reviews.
- Develop transition pathway planning with adult services including consistent application of Preparation for Adulthood protocol.
- Implement bespoke training programme for Advanced Practitioners to ensure high quality support to After Care workers.
- Embed and progress our EET strategy for all.
- Whilst there was an improved performance for Keeping in Touch particularly for the 19 – 21 cohort in April 22 this decreased to 81% and a thematic piece of work is taking place to understand this dip and to assure ourselves that we are keeping in touch with the most vulnerable people.

# Children's Social Care: Quality Assurance

## What have we delivered?

- Strong political oversight and challenge to all we do – Scrutiny; CEX and LM member assurance meeting & CPB, ensuring that children remain a priority for the Council.
- Created dedicated service for Practice Improvement & Learning under the leadership of a single Strategic Lead reporting into the DCS. This is ensuring that we have strong focus on quality of practice & making a difference to children is at the core of all work. It is enabling us to have traction in having co-produced pieces of work such as Supervision Framework & Practice Standards which are starting to become embedded & this is reflected in the audit outcomes.
- Sustained volume systematic approach to QA with 420+ being completed this year.
- Moderation is embedded into practice & starting to align judgements. All Heads of Service are now writing moderation reports to own quality of practice and service improvement. This has not only supported alignment of judgements in the audit process but also influenced practice improvement at team & service area level e.g. In one team following a thematic on the quality of visits, records are now being written to the child. This is supporting understanding of children's lived experience.
- Evidence of improvement in judgements and practice across the areas – 50% of audited case files audited in Q3 evidence “good” quality assessment, an increase from 37% the previous quarter; Planning is good in 41% of cases, Management grip increased to Good in 41% of cases an increase from 29% in Quarter 1.
- Reduction in number of inadequate judgements from 28% to 21% between quarter 2-3.
- 2 Live Audits at the front door (August and January) have taken place and conversational audits have started to take place on a quarterly basis. The findings from the live audit are being cascaded across the partnership and being woven into our threshold work to strengthen the quality and consistency of referrals and further develop our shared understanding of risk and need. An area of particular focus is changing the language of consent – to talk about “worries and does the parent / carer know you are talking to us”. This is in line with our reach out model at the front door.
- TSSP commenced their programme of multi agency audits, with the following areas being a focus: Domestic Abuse, Neglect and Complex Safeguarding. As part of the audit process held practitioner feedback sessions to share learning & develop agreed actions to improve the quality of practice and disseminate the learning.
- Two detailed supervision audits have taken place – including review of ASYE experience – this has been a key driver to embedding our revised supervision framework which has been practitioner and manager led development
- Continued “back to basics” approach but moving more to think about purpose & quality
- Delivered dedicated QA session to practitioners and managers within Practice Fortnight

## What difference have we made?

- Created a position where we are able to provide a very detailed and honest description of the quality of practice within the service, making us self aware.
- Used all of our learning to build into our bespoke Strengthening Practice Programme so that we are tackling the live issues.
- Significant increase in number of audits completed and moderated and we have embedded QA as everyone's business.
- Increasingly we are seeing moderators' judgements agreement with judgement of auditors – in Quarter 2 85% (35) were agreed and in Quarter 3 72% (43) were agreed . This means we have a shared sense of what good practice looks like and are starting to see improvement.
- Supervision audits have resulted in refreshed performance reporting but more importantly a practice led improvement piece of work has been completed to develop our new supervision framework.
- MA audit activity is influencing changes in practice e.g. improvement in quality or referrals; audit of referrals aligning with agreed pathway; the quality of and consistency of recording visits to children - this is helping us understand children's lived experience and enhance the quality of assessment
- Our DA audit work has resulted in changes to our training offer, the commissioning of services e.g. commissioning offer of therapeutic support for children and 2 perpetrator programmes
- Partners wanting to be part of our learning – CImCs, Live Audits & MA Audits
- Our targeted work through gate-keeping processes and use of thematic audits is helping delay with legacy issues and reduce drift and delay for children e.g. systematically reducing the number of children who are placed with parents and the progression of SGOs for children where appropriate

# Children's Social Care: Quality Assurance

## What have been our challenges?

- First line managers understanding that quality assurance is not *just* about audit.
- Changes in managers has impacted on embedding the learning loop and what the impact of our quality assurance actually is on a day to day basis.
- Findings from audit not consistently shaping practice improvement and influencing the outcomes for children.
- Practice remains in 'Requires Improvement' bracket but we are starting to see shifts in some areas.
- Maintaining levels of compliance as we went live with our new service arrangements but we adopted different approaches at that time e.g. used case progression clinics to review children's cases.
- Maintaining morale throughout the change process and when the level of scrutiny had increased. Our Care and Confidence programme and re connecting with values has helped with this

## What do we still need to do?

- Further enhance our Quality Assurance activity through observations of practice
- Build on the Quality Assurance Framework to maximise the use of thematic audits by Head of Service to ensure that practice improvement activity is timely and driven at team level.
- Refresh our bespoke Quality Assurance arrangements for Front Door activity.
- Strengthen our closing the loop processes to ensure that learning and improvement is being embedded at individual practitioner level and making a difference to planning and change for children.
- Continue to deliver 1 to 1 coaching support to embed self improving system.
- Create the culture where user feedback and understanding the lived experience of children and families is intrinsic to our quality assurance activity and service delivery.
- Enhance our menu of qualitative measures and distance travelled approaches to shine a light on impact for children and families

# Children's Social Care: Workforce

## What have we delivered?

- Recruitment and Retention Action Plan has been refreshed and developed into our 'Investing in Our People' (Recruit. Retain. Grow & Sustain) - our aim to be employer of choice, and to retaining & developing confident & competent practitioners & managers.
- This has included making structural and organisational changes to create manageable spans of control for managers and practitioners as well - Phase 1 of whole service redesign went live 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021.
- Procured an external recruitment provider to deliver targeted and innovative recruitment campaign including bespoke approaches to areas of greatest need.
- Continued to adopt a range of 'grow your own' approaches including social work apprenticeships & step up and have had our first trainee graduation and completed another two front line pods.
- Commenced 3 year programme with Strengthening Practice. Started the programme with sessions to allow the workforce to explore their own journeys with the authority, as we responded to both to the improvement process and the pandemic. Focused on the wellbeing & care of staff as they went through a restructure and continued to provide services.
- We have started our Core skills Programme to strengthen practice
- Completed a strategic analysis of staffing on a team by team basis to understand gaps/skill to inform our service redesign.
- Developed a practitioner led supervision framework – for practitioners and managers by practitioners and managers and rolled this out including 1 to 1 coaching sessions to ensure that our managers are confident and competent in delivering reflective supervision to impact on retention
- Maintained case loads at appropriate level – current average 17 children across service but we do have some pinch points.
- Commissioned & implemented practice led support for ASYEs & it is making a difference - our ASYEs are progressing & we have now developed our year 2 support offer. The impact of this is we are seeing reduction in the number of practitioners leaving at this stage.
- Implemented Market Force Supplement for posts that are hardest to recruit and retain.
- Implemented a project team approach for Children with Additional Needs to build back better and progressing agreed improvement plan
- Held our first Practice Fortnight in November 21, designed in a way that would best enable the workforce to share experience, learn from one another, and understand more about different areas within the service.

## What difference have we made?

- Created a service where leaders have manageable spans of control and clear lines of sight to practice and that also makes sense to the workforce but more importantly to our children and families,
- Implemented a systematic layer on layer approach to the recruitment in the newly designed service from Head of Service to social workers that has been successful; 95% of practitioners and managers were given their first preference & 65% of or new Practice Manager posts were recruited to from internal permanent candidates or agency workers who wanted to become permanent.
- Recruited to new leadership team and roles - means that we are now confident that we have the right people in place to progress with our improvements.
- Permanently recruited to 4/6 Head of Service Roles to date and majority of Practice Managers (10/16) are permanent employees, two of whom converted from interim to remain with us.
- Our work to reshape the and support our New Qualified Social Workers is making a difference & they have reported very positively about the managers. 4 NQSW have progressed so far this year and our ASYEs are having regular supervision and value it & we know this because we talk to them in 6 weekly formal meetings as well as informally.
- Strengthened our student pathway to recruitment with success doubled our number of NQSW; all 5 final year students currently on placement with us are being fast tracked to permanent recruitment and want to stay.
- Evidence of a reduction in the number of people leaving. Exit interviews have reduced from a high of 29 in quarter 2 to 5 in quarter 4 and the reasons for leaving have changed. The biggest reason for staff moving is personal and workload is now the lowest. Our turnover rate is still higher than we would like at 16.6%.
- Very few teams have 'gaps' in people on the ground but we know we still have a high % of agency staffing.
- In Practice Fortnight there were 750+ attendances at 25 separate sessions and representation from GMP, Housing, Mental Health, Education, DfE – this level of engagement is reflective of the learning and improvement culture we are embedding. This was further evidenced in our recent social work survey return where the strongest responses included "My organisation promotes a working environment that upholds ethical practice and quality standards".



# Children's Social Care: Workforce

## What have been our challenges?

- Whole service redesign has had a significant impact of the stability of our workforce. Natural effect of some staff deciding that they want to leave as can't see themselves a part of this moving forwards but coming through this now
- A lack of a reliable workload monitoring performance tracker, although one has now been developed that is supporting managers understanding of caseloads across their team and helping more senior leaders quickly identify any pinch points or emerging issues in terms of capacity. Caseloads remain manageable across both social care (17 children) and Intensive Family Support (20 children).
- The 12 month turnover figure at the end of Quarter 4 is 16.8%. The impact of the high number of leavers in the first half of the reporting year is impacting on this data. Exits have continued to slow in the second part of the year.
- Proportion of Interim staff versus permanent staffing is still too high – although significant proportion of interim practitioners have been with us some time
- A 'pinch point' in Families First in terms of workforce stability since moving into arrangements although caseloads remain manageable (average is 20).

## What do we still need to do?

- Engage in North West work to develop a "not for profit social work agency" for the NW.
- Review the new working arrangements to ensure that they supporting best practice
- Review our Front line approach to ensure it is sustainable model
- Develop our Social Work Academy including pathways into social care through unqualified routes

# Children's Social Care: Leadership

## What have we delivered?

- Continued corporate & political support – contingency fund to support demographic growth; agreement to have continued investment in Early Help; flexibility in safe COVID working to support “eyes on” workforce.
- Continued to focus on partnerships – strategically & operationally including establishing Safeguarding Effectiveness Board to challenge & oversee partnership activity.
- Created an experienced senior leadership team that have a clear line of sight to practice
- The service redesign created a wider Leadership Team, dedicated Practice Managers and Heads of Service roles with clearly defined service areas.
- Developed Practice Manager roles – to do what they say – manage quality of practice within teams and service areas!
- Developed solid performance and quality assurance arrangements. We have a good understanding of issues and emerging trends and are acting upon them.
- Become more data intelligent and exploring key issues
- Implemented bespoke management development programme as managers and practitioners move into new service arrangements e.g. Leadership Forum; managing change sessions and as part of “welcome to new role”; bespoke induction programme
- “Chunked up” immediate priorities for our managers and practitioners - identified 4 key areas of focus and overlaid these upon the 8 Ambitions
- Continued to tackle performance issues and kept all our conversations about children and families.
- Continued to progress shared learning and challenge.
- Rolled out Management supervision framework including 1 to 1 coaching sessions to ensure that our managers are confident & competent in delivering reflective supervision.
- Enhanced tracking processes are ensuring managers and HoS have grip and focus to reduce drift and delay for children and families.

## What have been our challenges?

- Middle managers that lead and own quality of practice
- IRO and Safeguarding exerting influence as system leaders
- Have needed to make brave decisions and hold our nerve – and we have!

## What difference have we made?

- We are already seeing Practice Managers and Heads of Service start to come together as an established and cohesive leadership group who are starting to drive forward practice improvement as routine and this is reflected in our audit finding.
- Sense of shared vision and starting to see ownership e.g. supervision framework was practitioner and manager led.
- We are starting to achieve stability within the management team.
- Changing the culture in Trafford – putting children first & being at the heart of all we do and this has been confirmed through external validation e.g. DfE review and analysis of our Care and Confidence modules.
- Increased trust and confidence in the service – particularly in the school space.
- Commitment to innovation – TTT and community collective and implementing changes in line with our identified need.
- Increased confidence in the service across the partnership.

## What do we still need to do?

- Continue to strengthen our partnership arrangements.
- Continue the rollout of the bespoke management and masterclass programme - building on Strengthening Practice programme.
- Ensure new managers are coached and supported as part of induction programme in the same way current managers are.
- Implement ‘annual conversations’ between DCS and Heads of Service, and Director and Practice Managers.

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** February 2022  
**Report of:** Jill McGregor – Corporate Director Children’s Services

### Report Title

Update on Children’s Services’ Improvement Activity

### Summary

This report provides an update and assurance on the progress of improvement activity within Children’s Services since the last update presented to Committee in October 2021.

The report details the actions and progress that has been made following the formal Monitoring Visit by Ofsted, in September 2021; progress against our Ambitions Plan as well as the recent evaluation by the DfE advisor as to the current position and progress in Trafford. (February 2022).

In doing so this report, recaps on the priorities that were outlined to committee in October 2021 and updates on progress within those areas, and of the identified short-term priorities.

### Recommendation(s)

- To note the contents of this report and the work that has been progressed to date.
- To agree to receive further updates
- To offer scrutiny and challenge to the service.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

**Name:** Jill McGregor  
**Extension:** 2365

Background Papers:  
Updated Ambitions Plan  
Ofsted Monitoring Visit – Published Letter  
Previous Report to Committee - October 2021  
Revised Children’s Services’ Structure

Please specify whether the content of the report relates to any of the following areas. If the report does not relate to an area just put N/A.

Corporate Priorities	
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	
Finance	
Legal	
Equality/Diversity	
Sustainability	
Carbon Reduction	
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management	
Risk Management	
Health and Safety	

### **Monitoring Visit**

As reported to Committee in October 2021 Ofsted undertook their second formal monitoring visits on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September with the report subsequently published on 2nd November 2021 (See background papers - Formal published letter).

Following the findings of this monitoring visit, the Service undertook an exercise to review whether the Ambitions Plan (Improvement Plan) and associated planned improvement activity fully addressed the key finding and whether any additional actions needed to be taken to support an acceleration of progress against critical priorities. These priorities included some specific actions within the areas of:

- Workforce stability
- Leadership and management
- Quality of practice

These action that has subsequently been progressed in respect of these key areas is detailed below

#### **Workforce Stability**

Workforce stability has continued to remain a significant priority for the service and is to be routed through Ambition 3 of the Ambitions plan under the action; 'Creating the Conditions for Practice to Flourish'. The impact of workforce instability was recognised during the Monitoring Visits, but it was also recognised that were factors that had contributed to this including the service redesign and continuing to work through the pandemic.

Despite this a number of actions have been progressed to improve the stability of the workforce these include:

- Implementation of the revised service structure and a detailed programme of change management to support “go live” with the new arrangements becoming operational on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021
- Continued roll out of Care and Confidence modules to support the workforce through this change
- Establishing a systematic programme of recruitment campaigns and engaging an external recruitment company to enhance the approach
- Continuing to work with interim staff who are in a position to consider permanent employment with Trafford.
- Strengthened the induction programme ensuring that managers and practitioners are welcomed and supported in new roles and responsibilities.

The impact of these actions has started to be seen in terms of both recruitment and retention activity. 14 new permanent social workers were recruited over the last 6 months, one agency social worker joined Trafford permanently, one agency social worker converted to a permanent advanced practitioner post and two agency team leaders are now permanent practice managers.

This was further recognised in the DfE advisor’s January highlight report:

*“Investment and appointment of a specialist recruitment agency to recruit to leadership posts on a permanent basis in the new structure and experienced Advanced Practitioners and Social Workers. This is beginning to show results and the churn in the workforce seen last summer is beginning to stabilise. Trafford are receiving good applications from good candidates”*

(Claire Burgess – DfE Highlight Report – Jan 22)

## **Leadership and Management**

There is a vast amount of activity taking place in this area including the embedding of the new Supervision Framework, and development of the Investing in our People Strategy. Since the last report, a new recording and monitoring system for supervision has been implemented that is providing an accurate self-view of frequency of supervisions. Quarterly thematic audits by Heads of Service have commenced that will serve to help evidence the improved quality of supervision. All practitioners have received a supervision in the month of December and January, with the only exceptions being where there has been sickness. The Practice Improvement and Learning Service are scheduled to complete a whole service audit to benchmark the quality of supervision across all areas against this new framework.

A Leadership Forum that has been established by the Director of Early Help and Social Care continues to be a key vehicle for strengthening the leaders and managers of the service. This is held on a fortnightly basis and the strength of bringing together the managers across the service has facilitated the development of consistent expectation and standards of practice

The continued embedding of the Quality Assurance framework at every level has resulted in the Service having a clear line of sight to practice and there is evidence of improvement activity being driven by managers. An increased volume of routine audits has been sustained (470 children's case files audited last year, a further 207 further audited via a moderation), and a mixed methodology approach has been introduced. This includes Live Multi-Agency Audit, TSSP Thematic Multi-Agency Audit, and conversational audits.

In addition, there is a developing sense of shared understanding of what "good" looks like. 44% of all audits across the last calendar year were further audited through a moderation. In quarter 2, 82% of all audits had the same grading after moderation).

There is a strong established understanding regarding the quality of practice and the service are now 'able to present an accurate self-assessment' however work is ongoing in respect of 'closing the loop' and getting to a place where this understanding is impacting on improvements for children and families.

### Quality of Practice

There has been a continued to focus on the critical issues that need to be understood to *improve* the quality of practice that is really going to impact for the better for children and families being supported. During this reporting period there has been a concentration on becoming more data intelligent, effectively utilising the now strong performance monitoring arrangement and comprehensive datasets to analyse information and identify emerging issues and trends. A key development in this regard has been the implementation of permanence tracker and scorecard for children in our care

This has enabled the service to track the progress of children's individual plans and whether there is any drift and delay in making long terms plans for our children as well as identify patterns and trends that may need focused attention e.g. this has supported the work in respect of children who are "placed with parents" and subject to legal care orders. The dedicated project approach that has been implemented has resulted in no care proceedings being concluded with the making of a full care order and children being placed with parents since May and there are currently 9 of discharge applications before the Court.

In November 2021 the service held the first Practice Fortnight as part of the continued investment in the workforce, and their development. The event was designed to share experience, learn from one another, and understand more about different areas within the service. The majority of sessions were delivered by operational staff and/or managers, some taking a 'Day in the Life of' format. In total there were over 750 attendances at over 25 sessions, with almost entirely positive feedback:

*"It has been a brilliant fortnight and lots of positive interactions between services. This can only improve the outcomes for children and families we work alongside." Final Single Service Briefing Attendee's comment*

Building on the success of this event, planning for World Social Work Week (and other opportunities for sharing and learning) and a launch of a 'Year of Practice' is currently being progressed and this approach will further strengthen the commitment to continuous learning and improvement and further support the ambitions to not only strengthen practice but to make Trafford the employer of choice.

There has continued to a focus on the implementation of the use Child Impact Chronology though dedicated training and embedding the use of Child Impact Chronologies within procedures and practice standards as routine, understand the key role these play in helping us to understand children's lived experience. Since September, all but two of the 14 families being considered as part of the Legal Gateway process have child impact chronologies and as such, the impact of the work in these areas is starting to be seen.

Fortnightly reports are submitted to the DfE regarding performance in respect of seeing our children, maintaining the position that that only by visiting children can there be an understanding of what life is like for them and that they are safe. Ofsted recognised that *"There has been a determined focus on increasing the time social workers spend visiting children and speaking to them, which has continued through the pandemic. Children are regularly seen face to face and are spoken to alone when appropriate"* but there remained an understanding within the service that there was more to do regarding improving the quality of visits to children.

The Practice Improvement and Learning Service undertook a thematic audit in January looking at the quality of visits. The headlines were shared in January's Improvement Board Steering Group where there was collective agreement to hold a dedicated leadership session to revisit the principles of visiting children. This was hugely successful with the group coming together to agree a programme of further development with all practitioners.

In addition, there has been investment through the procurement of a strength-based intervention programme, (a 3-year contract with a strategic workforce development partner - Strengthening Practice) is crucial to developing and supporting the workforce and will also have a positive impact workforce stability going forward. Strengthening Practice are continuing to work with the whole of the workforce on a bespoke Core Skills programme, as well as a smaller collaboration group. This will support practitioners through an intensive development programme over a three-year period. The work of the collaboration group is currently progressing the development of bespoke Trafford specific learning objectives and focus.

Ofsted highlighted that there was work required to strengthen the Safeguarding Unit and the roll of the Child Protection Chairs/Independent Reviewing Officers. This is being progressed through work with Professor Jan Horwath (Emeritus Professor of Child Welfare in the Department of Sociological Studies University of Sheffield). This externally commissioned work with focus on ensuring that the role of the Unit is routed in strength based approaches that support and engagement families in a meaningful way whilst also ensuring that risk is managed effectively particularly in relation ensuring the lived experience of the child is central to safeguarding management and practice.

### **Progress against the Ambition Plan**

Despite the challenges of recent months, the Service has continued to make progress against each of the 8 Ambitions within the plan.

In January, a full review of progress against each of the 8 Ambition took place, considering what has been achieved to date and, where relevant, to give clarity of what needed to be the short-term focus. It provided an opportunity for a sense check of

advancement in all areas of the detailed plan, to highlight those areas where it was apparent that further traction was required, and to reflect on achievements to date.

The updated action plan now outlines the priorities and some areas of focus for the forthcoming year, and it is the intention for this summary to provide key information to be considered on a Partnership basis through a series of round table events through February and March.

As a consequence of the progress that has been made in respect of establishing robust systems and processes (including the redesigned service arrangements) it is now vital to the next phase of improvement that the ambition workstreams are truly multi-agency. This is to both provide challenge and support, but to also ensure that the ambitions for children and families in Trafford are genuinely owned by the partnership.

With this in mind Ambition 8 will focus on quality of practice issues for the partnership e.g., improving the quality of referrals to CSC, the quality and effectiveness of strategy meetings or core groups.

A RAG has been applied to the Ambitions plan (attached) and the progress that has been made as follows:

**RED** - Limited or no progress with the action.

**AMBER** - Action is partially complete and on track with identified work still to do.

**GREEN** - Action is complete and is able to be reworded to reflect slight change in focus.

The document illustrates that there is progress within the vast majority of the multiple actions underpinning each Ambition. Ambition 1 (Leaders and managers at every level understand and influence practice to be consistently good) and Ambition 3 (Quality of Practice is consistently good across the service so that it makes a difference to our children and families) have seen the most substantial progress, alongside Ambition 2 (Children and families receive the right help at the right time from the right professional) where the prototype of the Trafford Team Together (TTT) model has been implemented across two locations (West and North) and is already having a positive impact on the children and families who are benefiting from it. The remit of the TTT model is now being expanded

A formal update of this plan was presented to the Improvement Board on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022 and is embedded within this report.

### Analysis and Summary of Position to Date

During this reporting period progress has continued against those areas that have been identified by Ofsted as needing to improve, and this continues to be monitored internally (through agreed quality assurance and governance processes) as well as through the formal oversight of DfE who recognised that:

*“Trafford has continued to deliver improvement despite a significant redesign and the on-going impact of Covid. This is a positive testament to the strength of the Leadership Team, Corporate and Political Leaders, working together to deliver improvement and make a difference to children’s lives.”* Claire Burgess - DfE January 22

In the most recent meeting with the DfE, following their 6 monthly review, it was reported that the biggest strength is how leaders, managers and all staff talk about children and young people, and that this is rare in inadequate authorities *“Over the last reporting*



*period it has become increasingly obvious that the culture of putting children first in everything that Trafford does is becoming embedded.” (Claire Burgess – DfE Highlight Report – Jan 22)*

This reflects the work and progress that has taken place over the last quarter however the leadership team continue to recognise that there is more that needs to be progressed to ensure a greater consistency of practice. As stated by Ofsted, a key determinant in achieving this is stability within the workforce.

The refresh of the Ambitions plan that is currently being progressed on partnership basis will provide further opportunities to ensure that action is being taken and ultimately that improvements for children and families are sustained.

### **Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

*The recommendations will be set out on the first page of the report. Set out here the reasons for those recommendations if they are not laid out within the main body of the report or consolidate the reasons if they are spread throughout the report.*

*Background Papers:*



Monitoring Visit  
Letter Sept 21.pdf



Improvement Plan 8  
Ambitions Update to



Children's Services  
(Revised Structure - O



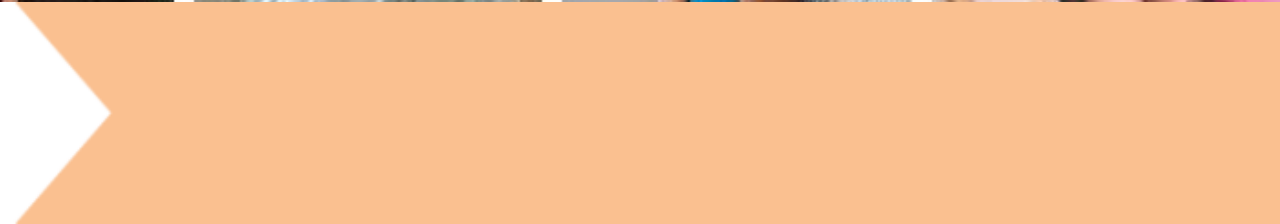
CSC Improvement  
Activity & Progress O

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# Summary of the National Review into the Murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson

Jill McGregor, Corporate Director Children's Service  
May 2022



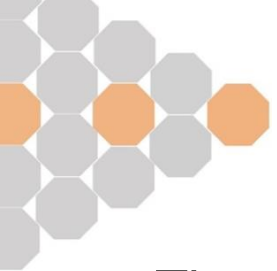
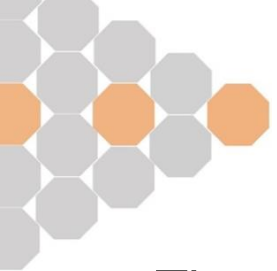


# Arthur and Star

- Arthur Labinjo-Hughes was a little boy who loved playing cricket and football. He enjoyed school, had lots of friends, and was always laughing. Arthur died in Solihull aged six on 17th June 2020. His father's partner, Emma Tustin, was convicted on 1st December 2021 of his murder. Arthur's father, Thomas Hughes, was convicted of manslaughter. They are now both serving prison terms.
- Star Hobson was an inquisitive toddler who loved to listen to music and would dance in her baby walker, laughing and giggling. Star died in Bradford aged 16 months on 22nd September 2020. Her mother's partner, Savannah Brockhill, was subsequently convicted of murder on 15th December 2021 and her mother, Frankie Smith, was convicted of causing or allowing her death. They too are now in prison.



# Background to the Review

- The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the Panel) is an independent body set up to identify, commission and oversee reviews of serious child safeguarding cases in England.
  - This national review was initiated in the context of widespread public distress about the circumstances of the deaths of these children that followed the conclusion of the two murder trials. Understandable questions were asked about why children had experienced such gross abuse and suffering when they were seemingly in 'plain sight' of public agencies.
  - It is also very important to acknowledge that Arthur and Star both died during the COVID19 pandemic. Therefore the Panel sought to understand, as far as it is possible, whether the circumstances of this global crisis affected Arthur and Star, their families and the response of professionals to what was happening in their lives.
  - Whilst undertaking the review, it was clear to the Panel that some of the issues that were identified were not unique to the experiences of Arthur and Star. The review therefore considered wider issues and evidence from serious safeguarding incidents reviewed in the last three years.
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# Arthur's Lived Experience

## **Arthur's mother arrested**

Olivia Labinjo-Halcrow arrested for Domestic Murder of Gary Cunningham. Arthur moves in full time with Thomas Hughes. A Children in Need assessment by Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT) concluded with no further action. Arthur's father was assessed to be a 'protective factor' for him.

## **Grandparents raise concerns about bruising**

Paternal grandparents voice growing concerns about bruising with Solihull Emergency Duty Team (EDT). EDT call police that evening relaying grandparents concerns. Police deny request for a 'Safe and Well' visit based on their observation of Arthur the previous day.

## **Social work team check on Arthur**

Following paternal grandparent's concern, the MASH send social workers to check on Arthur. Social workers report that Arthur and Emma's son are willing to show bruises – no safeguarding concerns were identified. An offer of 'Life Story' work is made.

## **Police receive photos of bruising**

Photographs of bruising are sent to the police by Arthur's uncle. They are received by the police but never sent onto the MASH.

## **MASH receive photos of bruising**

Family members continue to express their concerns to Children's Social Care, the police, and Arthur's school. The photos of bruising are passed onto the MASH by maternal grandmother on April 24th. End of April No further investigation It was decided that no further investigation was needed in relation to the family's concerns about bruising.

## **Emergency services called**

Emergency Services called as Arthur is suffering Cardiac Arrest after sustaining a severe head injury. He dies the next day.



# The Conclusions

- Professionals had only a limited understanding of what daily life was like for Arthur.
- Professionals did not always hear Arthur's voice. Arthur's voice was often mediated by his father in contact with professionals
- Thomas Hughes was seen from the very first assessment in 2019 as a protective father. Whilst this was a reasonable judgement at that time, this framing was never subsequently challenged by any professional when circumstances changed and when evidence to the contrary – such as reports from Thomas' own family that they were not sure he would protect Arthur – was available.
- There was never proper consideration given to the risks to Arthur arising from the move to live with Emma Tustin
- Arthur's wider family members were not listened to, despite their many attempts to get agencies to look into what might be happening to Arthur.
- The response to concerns about bruising to Arthur was undermined by the lack of a multi-agency strategy discussion, which should always be triggered when there are allegations about the suspected abuse of children.
- The West Midlands Child Protection Procedures did not include practice guidance in relation to allegations of the physical abuse of a child.
- Our conclusion is that a pivotal dynamic underpinning many of these practice issues was a systemic flaw in the quality of multi-agency working. There was an overreliance on single agency processes with superficial joint working and joint decision making. Robust multi-agency working is critical to the challenging work of uncovering what is really happening to children who are being abused.



# Star's Lived Experience

## **Concerns of domestic abuse and bruising**

Following concerns by a family friend, a social worker visited Star. The assessment was completed which included 3 visits. There were no obvious concerns noted or observed during the visits and the decision was made that the main issue was housing for Frankie and Star.

## **Referral to Children's Social Care**

Star's maternal great-grandmother made a referral to Children's Social Care in Bradford. The next day a social work team made an unannounced visit to Savannah's household and were content that Star was safe and well. It was concluded that the referral was malicious.

## **Father submits photos of bruising**

Star's father submits more photos of Star to the MASH with concerns over Star's treatment by Savannah. Child Protection Medical is arranged after Police talk with family. CP medical finds no points of concern and concludes that the bruising to Star was most likely to be accidental and consistent with parents account.

## **Video of Star with bruises emerges**

A video of Star with bruises on her face is exchanged between family members and some close adults on social media. The video is sent to the police. Police attempt a visit but Frankie and Savannah report that they are in Scotland with Star.

## **Maternal family contact the Integrated Front Door**

Star's maternal great grandfather contacted the Integrated Front Door (IFD) stating he had a video of bruising to Star. He was asked to send it by email but was unable to do so. A social worker contacted Frankie. Frankie said that she had already contacted her previous social worker to say that Star had bruised herself falling downstairs. There is no record of such a contact. As a result, a home visit was deferred until 4th September.

## **Star dies**

There was no further contact with professionals between 5th and 22nd September, when Star passed away after sustaining multiple injuries inflicted by Savannah





# The Conclusions

- Professionals had only a limited understanding of what daily life was like for Star, beyond a superficial assessment from “one off” visits, which did not build on any historic information known by each agency.
- Decision making in the Integrated Front Door reflected management priorities to respond to a high volume of referrals and ensure throughput of cases.
- Assessments did not explore the family context and interaction between family members, most specifically in relation to concerns raised about how Star was being treated
- Star’s wider family members were not listened to.
- Domestic abuse between Savannah and Frankie was cited by referrers to children’s social care in January and May 2020 but this was not assessed in the respective single agency assessments.
- Assessments within children’s social care were not fit for purpose and did not enable the identification of risks to Star and a plan for mitigating those risks.
- The responses to the referrals with concerns about Star were significantly weakened by the lack of formal multi-agency child protection processes, especially strategy discussions and consideration of whether Section 47 enquiries should be initiated.
- In 2020, Bradford children’s social care service was a service in turmoil, where professionals were working in conditions that made high quality decision making very difficult to achieve
- The volume of work and significant problems with workforce stability and experience, at every level, meant assessments and work with Star and her family were too superficial and did not rigorously address the repeated concerns expressed by different family members.
- There were undoubtedly multiple fault lines in multi and individual agency practice arrangements in Bradford in 2020, some of which are unique to that area.



# Core Issues


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**The review also highlights two important factors currently impacting the child protection system in England:**

- Multi-agency arrangements for protecting children are more fractured and fragmented than they should be.
- There has been insufficient attention to, and investment in, securing the specialist multi-agency expertise required for undertaking investigations and responses to significant harm from abuse and neglect. The review then goes on to look at more detailed findings.



# Practice & Practice Knowledge

- Understanding what the child's daily life is like, where this might not be straightforward
  - Listening to the views of the wider family and those who know the child well
  - Specialist skills and expertise for working with families whose engagement is reluctant or sporadic
  - Working with diverse communities
  - Appropriate responses to domestic abuse
  - Specialist skills and expertise for undertaking child protection investigations
- 



# Systems and Process


- Appropriate information sharing and seeking, which can be impacted by behavioural biases
  - Diffusion of responsibility
  - Source bias
  - Confirmation bias
  - Risk aversion
- Critical thinking and challenge within and between agencies
- Leadership and culture
- Wider service context
  - workforce development
  - funding levels and the strategic use of funding to invest in family support services
  - the impact of wider socio-economic factors and matching priorities to resources.



# Key Findings

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## Fundamental issues with practice:

- Weaknesses in seeking, sharing and acting on information from multiple sources.
  - A lack of robust critical thinking and challenge within and between agencies, compounded by a failure to trigger statutory multi-agency child protection processes at key moments.
  - A need for sharper specialist child protection skills and expertise, especially in relation to complex risk assessment and decision making, engaging reluctant parents, understanding the daily life of children and domestic abuse.
  - Underpinning these issues is the need for leaders to have a powerful enabling impact on child protection practice, creating and protecting the organisational conditions needed to undertake this complex work.
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## National Recommendations

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**Core recommendation**  
: *develop a new approach to undertaking child protection work*

Fully integrated, multi-agency investigation and decision making should take place throughout the entire child protection process.

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Only those with the appropriate expertise and skills should undertake child protection work.

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Leaders should be able to deliver excellent child protection responses and create the right organisational context to make this happen

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# A new expert-led, multi-agency model for child protection investigation, planning, intervention, & review

**Multi-Agency Child Protection Units to deliver excellent practice.**

The development of a new operational framework for undertaking child protection investigations, including planning, delivery and review of children who are at risk of significant harm.

The introduction of new multi-agency child protection units in every local authority, led by expert child protection social workers.

Membership of the unit to include as a minimum representatives from the police, health services, education, and children and adult mental health.

Links between “family help” teams and multi-agency child protection units and the multiagency safeguarding hub “MASH”





# Establishing National Multi-Agency Practice Standards for Child Protection

**These standards must be truly multi-agency in their nature and speak to all local Safeguarding Partners.**

Evidence-based guidance that can be followed by professionals from different backgrounds working with children and families in a child protection context.

The public should also have access to this information so they know what to expect from the child protection process and how to challenge when standards are not met.





# Strengthening Local Safeguarding Partners to Ensure Proper Co-ordination & Involvement of all Agencies

**Protecting children from abuse and neglect is a multi-agency endeavour. When things go wrong, a lack of co-ordination across agencies is often a key issue.**

Ensuring proper involvement and oversight by all agencies, particularly schools, colleges and other education providers.

Agreeing a shared set of values, systems and processes for all involved agencies.

Providing greater clarity on the role and function of safeguarding partners.

Improved leadership development to support safeguarding partners.





# Changes to multi-agency inspection to better understand local performance & drive improvement

**Inspectorates draw up proposals for a more genuinely integrated and comprehensive model of multi-agency inspection, adequately resourced by all partners, and integrated into the ongoing work of each inspectorate.**

Multi-agency inspection should play a stronger role in ensuring all areas are held to account for their multi-agency partnership working.

Inspectorates should firstly undertake an initial thematic review of multi-agency arrangements in a number of areas. A more integrated and comprehensive model of multi-agency inspection should then be developed and integrated into the ongoing work of each inspectorate.



# A new role for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in driving practice improvement in safeguarding partners



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## **National peer support capability for Safeguarding Partners is developed**

The Panel should facilitate greater sharing of learning and insights across safeguarding partners by developing a national peer support capability for safeguarding partners, which will help to disseminate learning and provide more practical, hands-on support.

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This role goes beyond learning from when things go wrong to capturing the best practice that protects the most vulnerable children





# A sharper performance focus and better co-ordination of child protection policy in central Government

**The establishment of a national Child Protection Board, bringing together all relevant central Government departments, local Government, the police, education and health representatives and others.**

To oversee performance in the child protection system, spotting emerging issues, ensuring the delivery of reforms, and acting as the escalation route for issues which need resolving at the national level

To develop a set of national operational standards for multi-agency child protection work; and

To oversee and ensure delivery of multi-agency child protection units in all local authorities.



# Using the potential of data to help professionals protect children

**Insight into areas where learning from other sectors could be used to improve child protection responses across the country.**

There is huge scope for better use of data and technological solutions in child protection and a need to 'upgrade' the digital landscape and innovate within it; but

Any innovation needs to be done with the user (practitioner) and families in mind – thinking about how best to support practitioners to do their job rather than trying to replace professional judgement.



# Specific Practice Improvements in Relation to Domestic Abuse

**Improvements must be made in developing the specialist skill and expertise of staff, and in information sharing between agencies.**

Safeguarding Partners to improve how they work with specialist domestic abuse services by establishing stronger working relationships and clear information sharing protocols.

Safeguarding Partners must be committed to, and fully invested in, the commissioning of DA services and ensure all staff have a robust understanding of what the DA support offer is in their area.

Appropriate responses to domestic abuse should feature clearly in the new National Child Protection Practice Framework and training should be embedded across all Safeguarding Partners for all practitioners to ensure they provide a domestic abuse informed response.



# Next steps for Trafford

- Development day with Trafford Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (TSSP) focusing on the National Review, Care Review and the Solihull JTAI
- Launch of the TSSP Safeguarding Priorities 22-25 held in October 2022
- Multiagency Quality Assurance Framework which focuses on practice, decision making and management oversight

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## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** July 2022  
**Report for:** Information  
**Report of:** Director of Education, Standards, Performance and Quality Assurance

### Report Title

**Overview of Elective Home Education (EHE)**

### Summary

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so.

This report provides an overview of Trafford's practice and principles of Elective Home Education (EHE), the current position in the Borough and future governmental changes.

### Recommendation(s)

That the contents of the report are noted.

### Contact person(s) for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Karen Samples: Director of Education, Standards, Quality and Performance  
Karen McCallum: Head of the Education of Vulnerable Children Service  
Michael McLaughlin: EHE Officer

#### **1. Introduction: What is elective home education?**

Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school full-time. Parents may choose to engage private tutors or other adults to assist in providing a suitable education, but there is no requirement to do so. Parents who choose to educate a child in these ways rather than sending the child to school full-time take on financial responsibility for the cost of doing so, including the cost of any external assistance used such as tutors, parent groups or part-time alternative provision.

#### **2. Reasons for elective home education - why do parents choose to provide it?**

There are many reasons why parents do choose to educate children at home, including those set out below:

- Ideological or philosophical views which favour home education, or wishing to provide education which has a different basis to that normally found in schools
- Religious or cultural beliefs, and a wish to ensure that the child's education is aligned with these
- Dissatisfaction with the school system, or the school(s) at which a place is available
- Bullying of the child at school
- Health reasons, particularly mental health of the child
- As a short term intervention for a particular reason
- A child's unwillingness or inability to go to school
- Special educational needs, or a perceived lack of suitable provision in the school system for those needs
- Disputes with a school over the education, special needs or behaviour of the child
- Familial reasons which have nothing to do with schools or education (eg using older children educated at home as carers)
- As a stop-gap whilst awaiting a place at a school other than the one allocated

These various reasons for undertaking home education are not mutually exclusive. For some children, several of these factors might apply.

Whenever possible, Trafford officers will encourage parents to discuss an intention to home educate children with school, before putting it into effect. We will also offer support and advise based on the individual family's motivations.

### **3. How do Trafford Local Authority know that a child is being educated at home?**

Trafford Council encourages parents who withdraw a child from school for home education to notify the school and/or the authority, although there is no legal obligation on parents to provide such notification, either in writing or otherwise, or indeed to provide any reason for withdrawal. Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the local authority.

### **4. Suitability of education at home**

There are no specific legal requirements as to the content of home education, provided the parents are meeting their duty in s.7 of the Education Act 1996. This means that education does not need to include any particular subjects, and does not need to have any reference to the National Curriculum; there is also no requirement to enter children for public examinations. There is no obligation to follow the 'school day' or have holidays which mirror those observed by schools.

Local authorities must make arrangements to find out so far as possible whether home educated children are receiving suitable full-time education. Questions as to the suitability of home education provision most often arise

either when a child is first being home educated, or alternatively when there is a change in the circumstances of a child whose education was previously satisfactory.

The EHE Officer provides each family with a questionnaire to complete. In our consideration of parents' provision of education at home, we may reasonably expect the provision to include the following characteristics:

- consistent involvement of parents or other significant carers - it is expected that parents or significant carers would play a substantial role, although not necessarily constantly or actively involved in providing education
- recognition of the child's needs, attitudes and aspirations
- opportunities for the child to be stimulated by their learning experiences
- access to resources/materials required to provide home education for the child, such as paper and pens, books and libraries, arts and crafts materials, physical activity
- ICT
- the opportunity for appropriate interaction with other children and other adults

Where a concern is raised regarding unsuitable education we will try to deal with it sensitively to ascertain whether there is a genuine issue or not. If there is an issue, we would try to support the parents wherever possible to meet the Government criteria for a suitable education. We would only issue an attendance order if all other strategies had failed and it was clear that the parents were not able, at that time, to provide an efficient and suitable education.

Our first step would be to arrange an informal meeting at a mutually acceptable location to address any specific concerns and to give the parents the opportunity to provide any further information as to how they are providing a suitable education. We would like the child to be given the opportunity to attend, but if they didn't wish to, or it was inappropriate, we would like them to have the opportunity to express their views. We would then consider and agree what future contact there will be between us, recognising that in many instances such contact might be beneficial but is not legally required.

We would only send a formal letter requesting further information if it still appeared to the authority that the child was not receiving a suitable and efficient education. A written report would be made after such contact and copied to the parents stating whether the authority has any concerns about the education provision and specifying what these are, to give the child's parents an opportunity to address them. Where concerns about the suitability of the education being provided for the child have been identified, more frequent contact may be required while those concerns are being addressed. Where concerns merit frequent contact, we would discuss them with the child's parents, with a view to helping them provide a suitable education that meets the best interests of the child.

**\*SEE APPENDIX 1: FLOWCHARTS**

## **5. Special Educational Needs**

The parents' right to educate their child at home applies equally where a child has SEND. This right is irrespective of whether the child has a statement of special educational needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC plan), or neither. Some parents educate, or attempt to educate, children at home because of dissatisfaction with local SEN provision.

When a child has a EHC plan, it is the local authority's duty to ensure that the educational provision specified in the plan is made available to the child - but only if the child's parents have not arranged for the child to receive a suitable education in some other way. If a child has an EHC plan and the parent/carer elects to home educate, then a joint meeting with the parents will take place which will consist of a SEND adviser and the Education Support Officer, to offer advice and guidance and assess whether the education that is being or will be provided is 'suitable and efficient' and that the child's needs are being met.

Following this, the usual SEND procedures will be followed, led by the SEND advisory service and the SEND casework team. If the child is a pupil at a Special School, the SEND Adviser will need to be satisfied that the education is suitable before the child can be removed from the school roll and an EHC plan/statement of SEN is amended accordingly.

In the case of a decision that the home education provision that is being made for a child with a EHC plan is not suitable, Trafford Officers will follow s.437 of the Education Act 1996 as they would for other children who are educated at home but are not receiving a suitable education.

The consideration of suitability may well be more complex and we may need to draw on a wider variety of information, for example educational psychologist reports. The naming of a school in the order will conform to the provisions of s.441.

Where parents who have withdrawn a child from a setting they regarded as unsatisfactory, Trafford will explore options which are different in nature from the previous setting.

## **6. Tracking and Monitoring / Safeguarding**

Trafford's EHE officer manages a dashboard which holds the details of EHE children and young people.

Local authorities also have a duty under section 175(1) of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This section states: "A local education authority shall make arrangements for ensuring that the functions conferred upon them in their capacity as a local education authority are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children."

Parents are advised to take up appropriate references and ensure that any tutor used has a reasonably recent Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure certificate. Tutors employed by a local authority, a school, or an agency may also undertake work for home-educating parents, in which case DBS checks

ought to have been made already and parents should confirm whether this is so with the body supplying the tutor.

School age children that are not receiving a suitable education will predominantly be responsibility of our Children Missing from Education (CME) Case Work which sits within our Pupil Absence Team.

Officers across Trafford Services may refer to Trafford First Response where:

- There is reason to believe the child may be at risk of harm
- There has been no contact despite all avenues being followed
- The lack of education means that the child is likely to or already is suffering from significant harm (either deliberately or unintentionally)
- There is not enough information received to determine whether or not a child is at risk of harm

When considering what steps to take, Trafford officers should be clear that the use of safeguarding powers is justified in line with the Elective Home Education Departmental Guidance for Local Authorities. Officers may also use legal powers available to them including School attendance orders and Education Supervision Orders.

## **7. Trafford School Attendance Orders (SAO)**

Where a parent does not provide evidence or sufficient evidence for the EHE officer to make a judgement on the education provision being suitable, under s.437(1) Trafford will give notice with the intent of serving a SAO in line with Trafford's CME guidance.

Where a child is going to be the subject of a school attendance order, the case will be presented to the Fair Access Panel to establish the most suitable provision.

If the school named in an order which is made is an academy, and the academy does not agree with this, a direction may be sought from the Secretary of State. In some rare cases officers may reasonably take the view that an SAO is not in the best interests of the child:

- If the child is within a few weeks of ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- If the child has physical, medical or educational needs leading to extreme vulnerability in a school setting - the local authority should then consider alternatives such as tuition provided by the authority itself
- The parent is actively working with the authority to improve the home education and seems likely to achieve suitability within a very short time

Following the issuing of the SAO, parents of the child may still work with the EHE Officer to present evidence that is suitable and apply for the order to be revoked. Parents can choose to refer the matter to the Secretary of State if they wish to contest Trafford's decision not to revoke the SAO.

If the child continues to be considered CME Under s.447(1) of the 1996 Act, Trafford can consider prosecuting a parent for non-compliance with a school attendance order must in any case consider, either as an alternative to

prosecution or as well as prosecution, making an application for an Education Supervision Order. The Court will decide whether or not the education being provided is suitable, full-time and efficient. The court can direct that the order shall cease to be in force if it is satisfied that the parent is fulfilling his or her duty. The Court has the power to issue a Parenting order if further non-compliance of the SAO occurs.

## **8. Education Supervision Orders (ESO)**

An Education Supervision Order (ESO) can be made under s.36 of the Children Act 1989 and gives Trafford a formal supervisory role in the education of children who are subject to them. The High Court or the Family Court can make an order if satisfied, that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have. Where a school attendance order is in force for the child, but has not been complied with, there is a presumption that the child is not receiving a suitable education unless the contrary is demonstrated. The supervision order can be in place for so long as determined by the court (which may extend it beyond the initial one-year term); it is not a 'one-off' like prosecution for non-compliance with a school attendance order.

The use of an ESO should in any case be considered as an alternative to, or as well as, prosecution for non-compliance with a school attendance order.

Trafford has a duty, if an ESO is made, to give 'due consideration' to the 'wishes and feelings' of the child and the parent(s); and this might result in improved home education.

An ESO imposes a duty on parents to allow Trafford Council (the supervisor) reasonable contact with the child, though this need not necessarily be at the child's home - unless the court imposes a visit at home as a specific condition of the order. Persistent failure to comply with direction given under an ESO is an offence unless the parent can show that he has taken all reasonable steps to comply, or that the direction is unreasonable. But in such cases the authority should be prepared to first make clear to the parents that the result of this may be an application to the court for a care order under s.31 of the Children Act 1989.

Where a young person is deemed to be at risk of harm Trafford will look towards its wider legal powers and statutory duties to protect young people as set out in the DfE's Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance

## **9. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children**

Trafford is sensitive to the distinct ethos and needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. It is important that these families who are educating their children at home are treated in the same way as any other families.

When a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller family with children of school age move to Trafford we strongly encourage families to contact the admissions team for help to access local educational settings if school places are desired, or the EHE Officer if families wish to continue or begin home educating.

## **10. Looked-after children**

Trafford is acting as the corporate parent of looked-after children and recognises that we assume the duties of parents under s.7 of the 1996

Education Act to ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education; this also applies where such children are placed by other authorities in Trafford and we should take the same steps to ensure that the child is not missing education as they would for any other child resident in their area. It is legally possible for a looked-after child to be educated at home (for example by foster carers) if the local authority as corporate parent decides this is appropriate after discussion with the carers.

In Trafford the Virtual school will work closely with the EHE Officer to ensure that the child is receiving a suitable education.

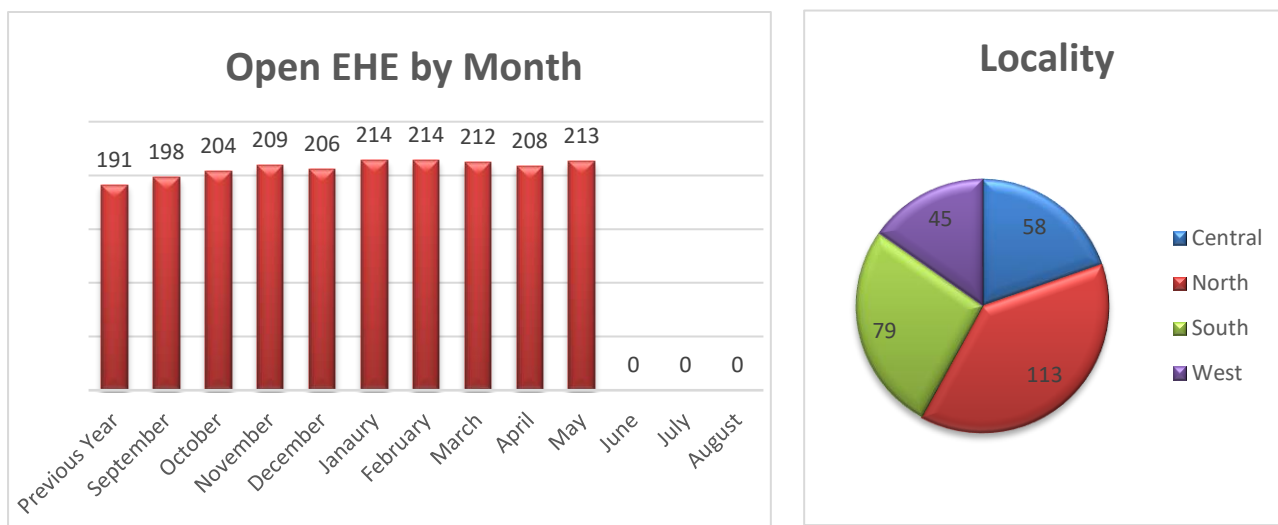
### 11.Children who have a Social worker

Sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004 give local authorities general duties for promoting the well-being and (in relation to their non-education functions) safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their areas. This includes children educated at home as well as those attending school. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requires authorities to make arrangements for ensuring that their education functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare. Therefore the general duties of local authorities in relation to safeguarding are the same for all children, however they are educated. Social services teams in local authorities and those dealing with home education should take steps to ensure that relevant information on individual children is shared.

Where a social worker is attached to a family, officers will inform them that the parents have chosen to home educate.

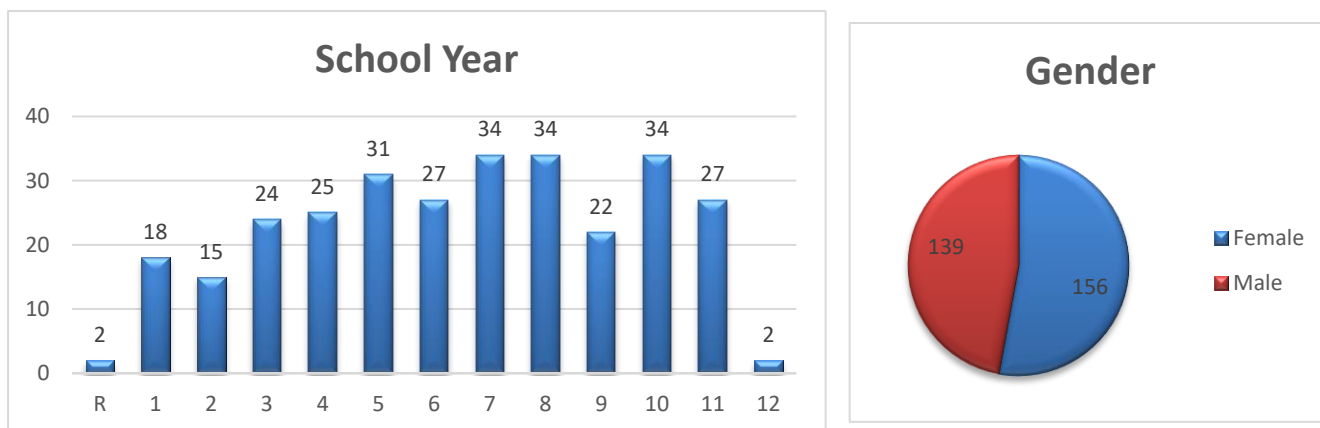
### 12.The current Trafford position

#### Breakdown of elective home education notifications 2021/2022



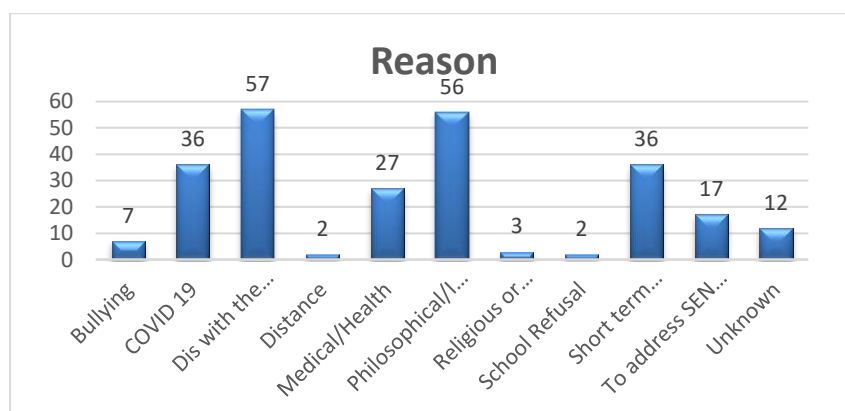
Trafford has continued to see higher numbers of electively home educated pupils since the start of the pandemic, which is not dissimilar to the picture nationally and across Greater Manchester.

Currently, there are 213 children on the EHE register, with the majority living in the North of the Borough.



There are a higher number of EHE pupils in the older year groups, with a greater proportion being female.

### Reasons for Electively Home Education in Trafford



The main reasons cited for families to choose to electively home educate are:

- Dissatisfaction with the system
- Philosophical/Ideological reasons
- Short term intervention

### 13. Next steps for EHE

In February 2022, the government confirmed the introduction of an elective home education (EHE) register. They stated that whilst there are a wide range of reasons why some families might prefer to home educate children and in the vast majority of cases home educating parents do an excellent job, at the same time, it's really important that home education doesn't result in children dropping off the radar and becoming vulnerable to poor standards of education or risks to their safety and wellbeing.



Therefore, the government have announced plans to go ahead with the creation of local authority administered registers for children not in school to allow support for local authorities to make sure they know where every child is being educated, that it is of the right quality, and that support is offered to home educating families.

There are plans to start the process to set up the registers at the earliest legislative opportunity. At that point, government will set out the details of what is proposed. The aim is for the registers to be a comprehensive record of where every child is being educated in a local area, which at the moment doesn't exist consistently. Having that will allow local authorities to know where home education is happening and check that families have the support they need.

## APPENDIX 1: FLOWCHARTS

### Summary flow chart

This chart summarises the main features of the legal options open to a local authority if it is satisfied that a child is not receiving a suitable education at home.

