



## Report to CYPF Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017

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**Report:** Carly Spechley, Director of Children and Families

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**Subject:** Children in Care and Care Leavers Annual Report

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**Author of Report:** Joel Hanna, Assistant Director, Provider Services

**Summary:** Update on the progress of Sheffield's Children in Care and Care Leavers.

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Type of item:	The report author should tick the appropriate box
Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	x
Other	

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

- Consider the progress of our Children in Care and Care Leavers
- Note the progress of the Sheffield City Council Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015/17 Children in Care and Care Leaves
- Note the Intention to publish a revised and updated Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy in November 2017.
- Note and champion the support required across the authority and partnership to drive performance improvement

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**Background Papers:**

- Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report
- Annual Looked After Children Health Report
- Report on the Sheffield Youth Justice Plan
- Ofsted Action Plan
- Virtual school annual report

**Category of Report:** OPEN

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## **1 Purpose**

*"As corporate parents, elected members and council officers have a statutory responsibility for the wellbeing of children in care. Elected members play a large part in holding officers to account as well as being proactive in the corporate parenting role themselves"* (Sheffield City Council Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015/17)

The purpose of this report is to provide in the Scrutiny Panel the opportunity to review performance and to deliver understanding of what it is like to be a child looked after by Sheffield City Council to elected members, and to enable elected members to use this information to hold officers to account, in order to be the best possible corporate parents we can be to children in our care.

## **2 Introduction/Context**

**2.1** Sheffield has historically had lower numbers of Looked After Children per 10,000 than both its statistical neighbours and Core Cities: Since 2007 Sheffield has had a general decline in the numbers of children becoming looked after although there has been a steady increase in these over the past 18 months. In 2016 Sheffield had 46/10,000, compared to 82 for core cities and 74 for statistical neighbours.

**2.2** There were 588 children in care in Sheffield as at April 2017, this is an increase of 70 since April 2016, however this remains below the numbers at their peak in 2007 (690).

**2.3** The proportion of male children in care in Sheffield is slightly higher to female with a ratio of 1:2:1 (321 boys, 267 Girls) this is a more equal split compared with 2015 when three out of five children in care were male. This is more in line with the 50:50 gender profile of the 0-17 year old population as a whole.

There are differences with the age profile for looked after children compared to the general population with 58% age 10 or above compared with 43% for the city as a whole. This profile is partially due to the increased entrants but also to some long term placements for children. However this brings additional pressures on the service as this age group can have increasing complexity of behaviour. It will also create additional needs on future provision for care leavers.

**2.4** The ethnicity profile of the children in care population is much more in line with that of the city; 28.5% BME compared with 30% for the 0 - 17 year old population as a whole.

**2.5** In 2016/17 there has been some significant issues across Europe for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. Sheffield has been proactive in offering support to this group of children and currently there are 29 children who are looked after, that came to Sheffield as unaccompanied asylum seekers.

**2.6** Prevention of drift is important in children's lives. It is therefore important that we ensure that children are moved out of the care system where it is right to do so. The number of children leaving care in Sheffield has remained fairly constant at around 270 children for each of the past four years. It is positive

that there has been an increase in the proportion of children who cease to be looked after due to permanence (adoption, child arrangement order or special guardianship order) from 33% in 2014/15 to 38% in 2016/17. The proportion of children leaving care who returned home to parents was 29%. The proportion of those leaving care and entering independent living arrangements has dropped slightly from 15% in 2014/15 to 13% in 2016/17.

**2.7** A key requirement for our services is to ensure that the children and young people in our care receive regular visits from their Social Workers. We know from our monitoring that these statutory visits to children in care are too low, with nearly 20% of children and young people not receiving a visit within the required timescale.

### **3 Children in Care and Corporate Parenting Strategy**

**3.1** Sheffield City Council Corporate Parenting Strategy was agreed for 2015/17 by the Corporate Parenting Board and endorsed by the Council. This is a joint statement of intent between Sheffield City Council and our partner agencies to work together to deliver the best outcomes we can for children who come into and leave our care. The Corporate Parenting Board is led by the lead member for Children's Services and the board holds officers to account and scrutinises outcomes.

**3.2** Key objectives and actions in this strategy have been determined by local and national priorities, and in consultation with children and young people. They are:

- Engagement and influence (involvement) of children and young people who are in care
- Educational attainment and achievement
- Health and well-being
- Permanence
- Integrated placements and placement stability
- Safeguarding and vulnerability
- Care leavers

**3.3** Sheffield City Council is committed to improving the outcomes of it's looked after children. This report to scrutiny details not only our areas of success over the past 12 months but also areas which we know we need to continue to address.

The report is split into each priority area and details the issues that we are currently concerned about as well as the achievements of 2016.

### **4 Priority 1 – Engagement and Influence of Looked After Children and Young People**

**4.1** Work has continued throughout 2016 and into 2017 to actively engage and increase the influence of looked after children, and there have been some very positive outcomes. However, a recent audit of looked after children (below) and their experiences did not show the results that we would have wished for or that

our children have been working with us to achieve. It was disappointing that the work to improve engagement has not had the necessary impact but we will take the lessons and include these in the work being undertaken to rectify and improve this position.

#### **Current assessment.**

**4.2** The Children's engagement team undertook an audit of children in care (CiC) and care leavers in June 2017 as part of the Director of Children's Services Stocktake. 45 children and young people, aged between 5 and 25 were interviewed. There were 10 from each category which included children in care, care leavers, child protection, and child in need and 5 from early help.

**4.3** The high level findings from this work raised concerns about the way that we are currently working to include children and young people. The findings represent a direct contrast with our stated pledge to children in care that we will give them a voice, include them in service improvement and ensure that they will know how to make a complaint.

Summary findings from the 2017 voice and influence audit

#### **Positives:**

- Most children feel they know why they have someone working with them and their family.
- Many children recognised a positive impact on their family as a result of having a worker.
- Care leavers could reflect on the concerns raised by professionals and the reason for them being taken into care.
- Some children reported positive relationships with their workers.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Most children reported that they don't know what the plan is for them and/or their family and don't get a copy. Care plans are subject to specific regulation and care plans must include children's views.
- Many children reported not being able to contact their worker – care leavers and children in care especially felt that the worker rarely returned their calls and all categories reported workers cancelling appointments with little notice.
- Most children did not know how to complain if they needed to.
- Most care leavers reported negative experiences of support after they had left care, including little or no support from their PA, no knowledge of a plan, no help with practical issues and very low expectations.
- Many children would like more control to decide where they are seen by the worker.



## Children in Care Council

**4.4** The stocktake recognised the positive work that has been achieved through the year, particularly around the children in care council;

- The Children's Involvement Team (CIT) were commissioned to facilitate the Sheffield Children in Care Council (CiCC) in January 2015. The CiCC are a group of ten energetic and enthusiastic 13-18 year olds who meet every fortnight to work on projects to improve the care experiences of children in the care of Sheffield local authority.
- The group's main areas of focus during the year have been 'relationships with social workers' and 'money' as well as working on recruitment and publicity for the group.

### **Relationships with Social Workers:**

The group continued their work on this topic from the previous year. Their film, "Our Messages for Social Workers" has been a huge success both in Sheffield and nationally. During the year, the film has been:

- Shown to Sheffield social workers across all worksites
- Shown at the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University to social work students
- Used in training sessions delivered to 'Step Up to Social Work' students across Yorkshire and Humber.
- Some CiCC members have been involved in delivering training themselves to more than 50 social workers this year
- Shared in the Children and Young People Now magazine as an example of best practice of ways of engaging young people in delivering training
- Shortlisted for a Children and Young People Now Award in December 2016 and won a Diana Award in July 2016 for 'services to the local community'. They also received a Silver Plate of recognition for their work from Jayne Ludlam at the city's Star Awards which is now on display at the Town Hall
- Shared at Sheffield's annual Evidence Informed Practice Conference as an example of exemplary practice
- The group have designed a booklet for social workers to use when they are meeting a child in care for the first time. The idea for the booklet came from the group seeing the results of 2015 looked after children's survey in Sheffield and seeing that a proportion of children in care didn't know their social worker's name. The booklet includes details such as the social worker's name, working hours, contact details and other information the CiCC felt would break down barriers between a social

worker and the child they are working with. These are now being used across the city.

### **Pocket Money and Independence Allowance**

The CiCC also studied Sheffield's Independence Allowance policy. They designed a survey which they then used to carry out peer research in children's homes across the city. They are currently preparing to invite every Sheffield child in care between 16 and 18 years of age to complete the survey on the CiCC website, with a free prize draw. This consultation ended in May 2017 and discussions on the findings are now being shared with relevant service managers. This will then be used to inform our revised policies for how we support our 16-18 year olds in independent placements

### **Recruitment and membership:**

The CiCC hosted a 'meet and greet' evening in September of 2016 for other Sheffield children in care to find out more about the group with a view to becoming a member. The group also had a stall at the 'Bag a Book' event to attract new members. As a result of these activities, seven new members joined the group. During the year, five members reached 18 years old and moved to the Care Leavers' Union.

### **The Children in Care Council Website**

The CiCC members have designed their own website which is now live and the group are able to update and edit it themselves. They have each written their own profile and are able to share news about current projects and consult both children living in and out of city more easily to feed their views into the CiCC's work.

### **Regional Children's Commissioner Event**

Three members of the CiCC attended a regional gathering of Children in Care Councils from across Yorkshire and Humber, held in York. The Children's Commissioner has asked the group to work collaboratively to plan and deliver an event for decision makers in each of the regions sharing best practice and issues they'd like to see change. The CiCC members will attend further planning meetings throughout the coming year, culminating in the final event in autumn 2017.

### **Presentation skills training**

Six CiCC members attended a two-day course delivered by external trainer Alan Matthews to develop their skills around presenting and delivering training and workshops.

### **Trip to Flamingo Land**

The group enjoyed a group bonding trip to Flamingo Land in the summer to celebrate their achievements and have some fun time together.

## The Sheffield Care Leavers' Union

4.5 In April 2016, the Children Involvement Team were further commissioned to capture the voices of care leavers in Sheffield. In September 2016 a 0.5 FTE post was successfully recruited to and a group of six care leavers formed an initial group, calling themselves the Sheffield Care Leavers' Union (SCLU). The group currently meets every two weeks. From 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 the group increased in number to eleven members aged between 18 and 25.

- Key areas of work during the year have been as follows:
  - SCLU members worked in partnership with the Permanence & Through Care Service to plan and run the care leavers innovation celebration (CLIC) Event.
  - The Children's Involvement Team, in partnership with The Brathay Trust, a national charity, recruited eight care leavers to a programme leading to a level 2 leadership qualification. The young people committed to weekly meetings and a four day residential. Of the eight care leavers who started the project, four completed the full qualification and four achieved part qualification.
- SCLU has met fortnightly over the year and have achieved the following:
  - Established a group name and logo
  - Established group aims and the purpose of the group
  - Explored the corporate parenting concept in relation to care leaver needs and identified ten key expectations from corporate parents
  - Two SCLU members attended and presented at Corporate Parenting Board (CPB)
  - Planned and delivered a joint meeting with the Children in Care Council to present to and discuss with CPB members
  - Two SCLU members were elected to represent children in care and care leavers on Sheffield Youth Cabinet
  - Four SCLU members attended the national Young People's Benchmarking Forum in Liverpool and Durham
  - Attended and contributed to the Children's Commissioner's Event in Liverpool with the CiCC members
  - Members of the group have been involved in a number of recruitment opportunities for staff working with care leavers and children in care in Sheffield, including youth justice panel members,

the Director of Children and Families Service and social work students

- SCLU members have received training in public speaking and presenting and interviewing.

## **5 Priority 2 - Educational Achievement and Attainment**

### **Educational achievement**

**5.1** Sheffield City Council continues to prioritise educational achievement for our children in care. There have been some areas of significant success in the past year, however, there remain some areas which are more challenging to address.

**5.2** The Virtual School is the key educational advocacy service for Sheffield's children in care (CiC) regardless of where they are placed. Its role is to promote the educational achievement of CiC, and challenge schools and other education providers to ensure that CiC have the best possible education. It does not itself provide education. Instead it recognises that schools are responsible for the educational outcomes of its children, and holds them to account for the provision they offer and deliver to ensure the life chances of each child in care is improved.

### **Summary of key achievements and challenges 2015-16**

- Raising of the profile of the Virtual School within the Sheffield education community.
- Engaging with the newly formed National Association of Virtual School Heads at regional (Yorkshire and the Humber) and national level.
- Emotional health and wellbeing training project for schools, focussing on attachment disorders.
- University homework study club and mentoring scheme for Y5 and Y6 children.
- Continued funding and organisation of the letterbox book club scheme.
- Additional support for children in Y6 and Y11 with targeted preparation for SATs and GCSEs.
- Delivering and commissioning training for designated teachers, carers and social workers.
- Participation in the STAR Awards for children in care.
- Providing advice and support for 350 children through participation in PEP meetings and CiC reviews.
- Redesign of the ePEP (Personal Education Plan).
- Extending the work of the Virtual School to cover early years and post-16, and the introduction of a new ePEP to facilitate this. This represents a significant challenge, as there is no additional capacity on the virtual school team to accommodate this.
- Organisation and delivery of university outreach scheme for Y10 and Y11 students.



- Introduction of revised policy for the pupil premium for looked after children.
- Increased 'cross-border working' with neighbouring Virtual Schools. The challenge here is to meet the needs of Sheffield children placed in care out of authority and to support the Virtual Schools of other authorities that have CiC attending Sheffield schools.

**5.3** The virtual schools continues to improve its provision as it strives to improve the attainment of our looked after children. However despite the progress made in engagement with schools, partners and other authorities we still face significant challenges with the performance outcomes. Our performance is below our statistical neighbours and core cities and regional authorities at all three assessed areas: reading writing and maths at key stage one.

**5.4** For key stage 2 data, Sheffield looked after children perform worse in reading and maths, but achieve better outcomes for writing, where they perform above all core cities, regional authorities and statistical neighbours.

We continue to have difficulties with obtaining data on performance of those children placed out of area or in specialist education/social care settings in respect of key stage 4 data. This means that our performance data is unreliable for this age group.

### **Exclusion and attendance**

**5.5** Persistent absence (PA) remains higher for Sheffield CiC than for national and core city comparators. In 2016 Sheffield had 12% classed as PA, compared to national (9.1%) and core cities (9.8%). Sheffield's PA is also higher than the national average for PA for state funded schools 10.5%. The Virtual School utilises a service provided by 'Welfare Call' to monitor attendance at school and alternative provisions on a daily basis by an individual phone call to check every student is at school. Where students are not at their provision the Carer is contacted to ascertain the reason for absence and the Social Worker and Virtual School are notified. This ensures the whereabouts of every student is monitored on a daily basis. Work continues to be done in partnership with schools and social care professionals to reduce further the number of CiC who are persistently absent from school.

**5.6** Persistent absence figures are regularly analysed and split by different factors such as social care placement type. For example, PA rates are much higher for children placed at residential homes than for children placed with LA foster carers. As a result of this analysis, the Virtual School attend team meetings at the residential homes to highlight the attendance issue and advise what support there is to tackle the problem.

**5.7** Fixed term exclusions for Sheffield CiC have continued to fall and in the last published figures Sheffield has a lower percentage than national or comparator groups. The Virtual School has established good working practice with schools, alternative learning providers and other services to ensure that the potential exclusion of looked after children is only considered after a number of other measures. Any exclusions are closely scrutinised and alternative education for

the students is provided where possible to minimise disruption to education and care placements.

## **6 Priority 3 - Health and Well Being**

**6.1** The work to ensure that our children in care and care leavers receive the right support and access to health services is delivered through a joint working group including health commissioners, providers and children services. In addition to the performance measures in place for the Council there are a number of performance requirements monitored through health services.

### **Key data**

- Performance on Annual Health Assessments is good at 97% however, we have continued to have poor performance relative to comparator groups in respect of achieving initial health assessments for children entering care. The target for IHA is set at 20 days from point of entry. Continuing efforts to address this performance have been ongoing throughout the past year and there has been steady improvement but not fast enough. As from this month Sheffield Children's Hospital Looked After & Adopted Children's Health Team (LAACH), have moved to a new information management system that is anticipated to support speedy improvement in this measure.
- Whilst we have seen gradual improvement with regards to the number of children in care having dental health checks Sheffield's performance remains consistently worse than comparators 73% (2017) SN 88% and core cities 79% (2016).
- Performance on immunisations is improving although it still remains below the comparator groups 2013. 85% (2017) SN 92% and core cities 88%.
- Improved identification of risk and earlier intervention has accounted for a growth in recorded substance misuse which has grown from 2% to 3% (2016). This growth has resulted in more children receiving interventions and this is a positive outcome.
- 100% of referrals to Multi Agency Psychological Services (MAPS) (CAMHS provision for CiC) are accepted and seen within 18 weeks (most are seen within 4 weeks).
- All children and young people have access to GP, School Nurse, Health Visitor and a Specialist Looked after Children nurse
- A review of Multi-Agency Psychological Service (MAPS) has taken place and plans to improve access to emotional wellbeing and mental health support are being developed

**6.2** Although we recognise that there are clearly challenges that need addressing, during 2016 there has been a continued effort to ensure that the health assessment information reflects the child and young person's current

circumstances. Through partnership working processes are developed to ensure that health assessments are timely and robust, and monitoring is in place.

## **7 Priority 4 Permanence**

**7.1 Adoption** - The % performance on adoption improved rapidly after the Ofsted inspection from 15% (2015) to 28% (2016) better than comparators and stabilising with in-line performance 19% (2017) SN 20% and better than core cities 17% (2016).

- Adoption score card, the authority continues to find the timeliness of adoption processes a challenge, but recognises that these are impacted on by our commitment never to give up on any child, which can have negative impacts on timeliness data. We have seen steady improvement in both the national measures on timeliness though still remain above the target times.
- We have continued to see an increase in the percentage of children moving to permanence through adoption, Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and Child Arrangement Orders over the past 12 months from 33% to 38%. However, we still perform less well that comparators with regards to SGOs and are currently revising our policy as part of a deliberate strategy to achieve greater take up of this as a permanence option. We will continue to target those children where alternative permanency decisions are appropriate.

### **What we achieved in 2016/2017**

**7.2** We continue to ensure that as many children who have adoption in their plan are adopted as quickly as possible. Last year 51 children were adopted. We have made improvements in the performance against the national score card (referred to as A1 and A2) these are :-

- **A1**– Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted in 2016/17 the average time was 438 (days) compared to 520 the previous year.

This gives a three year average of 499 days which remains over the three year target as set by the DfE of 426 days. We have significantly reduced the overall average number of days and anticipate that this target will be met at the end of 2017/18.

- **A2** - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days).

We achieved an average of 223 days between placement order and matching with prospective adopters; this means a three year average of 275 days. There

has been a reduction in the in-year average from 289 days and for the three year calculation from 282 days.

- 26 new adopter approvals, including couples and individuals
- Sheffield Adoption Service has accessed the adoption support fund to support the delivery of adoption support to families where therapeutic support is required. During the financial year 2016/17 Sheffield City Council claimed and received £345,974 which is expenditure that is committed or incurred in respect of therapeutic intervention.
- The service continues to develop and strengthen partnerships internally and externally to improve children's outcomes. We have started work within the South Yorkshire region to develop plans for establishing closer working in line with the regionalisation of adoption programme.

## **8 Priority 5 Integrated Placement Strategy**

**8.1** We recognise the importance of children remaining within their communities and of those children where there is a home address recorded 78.2% of these children (526 children) are placed within 20 miles of their home postcode. 4.8% (28 children) live over 60 miles from Sheffield. We are continuing to work with all partners to increase the available capacity of placements in the city to support maintaining and in some cases returning children to their local areas.

- Short term placement stability – the service has improved performance in this area to 11% in line with all comparator groups. This is a significant increase from recent years.
- Long term placement stability - performance in this area has been consistently good over the last seven years 70% (2017) SN 66% and core cities 66% (2015).

**8.2** However, the number of local authority foster care placements available has fallen, with more children being placed outside the area with Independent Fostering Agencies. This along with more use of residential placements, including for younger children, is limiting the choice and ability to best match children to placements as was as creating increased costs to the authority. We are currently developing a range of supports to provide an alternative to this situation.

### **What we achieved in 2016/2017**

**8.3** Following a comprehensive assessment of the sufficiency of placements within the authority undertaken over 2016 the service is implementing plans to develop provision including resetting the business plan to expand and improve our Fostering Service. We are also developing a range of interventions to



support children remaining at home, were safe to do so, and assess new initiatives to support children to remain in foster placements locally reducing the need for external placements. We will build on the work with providers and partner authorities undertaken during 2016 to redesign the service offer.

## **9 Priority 6 Safeguarding and Vulnerability**

**9.1** We want to ensure that all the children who are in our care are safe, and we actively seek to identify areas where looked after children may be vulnerable and to mitigate against risk. Sheffield City Council does not do this in isolation, and takes a multi-agency approach to ensuring that it's looked after children are safe. Whilst we have areas of excellent practice in safeguarding, there remains some areas of challenge

### **Young People who go missing**

**9.2** Our performance data for children who go missing is higher than our statistical neighbours, 14% 2016 versus 8% for core cities and 7% for statistical neighbours. Although it is recognised that Sheffield has good reporting around children going missing and has been quick to respond to in year change in reporting criteria, and we recognise that this number is too high and further efforts, in partnership with the police, are due to be implemented. These include:-

- The Sheffield and South Yorkshire Multi-Agency Protocols have been completely re-written, and are now consistent with the recent College of Policing new guidance. This replaced the two tier system where young people were classed as either 'missing' or 'absent', with a new system that looks at where all young people are classed as missing, and will be assessed for levels of risk ranging from 'no apparent risk' through to high risk cases that require immediate action.
- A series of worksite briefings were undertaken, led by the newly established multi agency Missing Young Persons Operational Group (MYPPOG) members, to inform relevant partner organisations (i.e. independent residential children's homes and fostering agencies) of the changes to the protocol
- The revised Sheffield and South Yorkshire Multi-Agency Protocols to support those children/young people who go missing are informed by evidence based 'best practice' and 'interventions that work', and seeks to both reduce the numbers of children who go missing and the number of missing episodes pertaining to each child.
- The revised protocols will ensure that:
  - Information is appropriately collected, shared, acted upon and reported about children/young people who go missing from home or care

- All agencies are working to the same new definitions of ‘missing’ and models of risk assessments, and all carers, including residential and fostering, adhere to the Sheffield protocol with regard to reporting young people missing and the action they must take. This ensures that the correct action is taken when reporting incidents and the correct responses are actioned when the child’s circumstances have been assessed
- Reporting is consistent with government guidance and is aligned with DfE data requirements
- We fully meet the expectations and requirements set out in the statutory guidance.
- Independent Return Interview arrangements
  - In May 2016 a dedicated resource of one full time and one part time Return Interview Officers (RIOs) was identified from the existing pool of Youth Justice Support workers this has been increased to ensure we meet demand.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

**9.3** The Children’s Sexual Exploitation Service continues to work effectively with partners to reduce vulnerability and increase safeguarding against the risk of sexual exploitation of children by enhancing staff awareness and training the children’s workforce on risks and indicators. The Children’s Sexual Exploitation Service completed a series of Roadshow events on the referral process to the service. The Roadshows covered:

- The referral process and what happens next
- What happens once a young person is placed within Sexual Exploitation Service
- Specific issues for boys and young men
- The links between Child Sexual Exploitation and Sexually Harmful Behaviour
- The multi-agency sexual exploitation service have provided training throughout many services and maintain a link person to each Children’s home to offer advice and support to children young people and staff
- Sheffield Futures ran a two month campaign ‘Let’s talk about Sexting’ to address the issues young people face regarding sexting and identify how the often devastating consequences can be prevented.

- The main desired outcome identified 'to better inform young people and parents about the issues and associated risks' has been achieved by focusing on a specific issue surrounding sexting each week, using case studies and accounts from young people and parents who have been personally affected, and by using social media as a vehicle in the campaign. The campaign received local and regional recognition for its innovation

### **Vulnerable Child and Young People Risk Management Panel**

**9.4** Children and young people face a multitude of risks and vulnerabilities, from being abused or exploited sexually to being radicalised or drawn into gangs, and it is critical that agencies work effectively together to reduce the vulnerability and risks to protect and safeguard these children. Sheffield has brought together a range on partners in the Vulnerable Child and Young People Risk Management Panel. This meets monthly to bring together key partners (South Yorkshire Police (including Protecting Vulnerable People Unit), Social Care, Provider Services, Safeguarding, Sheffield Safeguarding Children's Board, Youth Justice Service, Community Youth Team, Sexual Exploitation Service, Community Safety, Health, Education and Licencing) to tackle complex cases, offenders and locations, and ensure:

- A child-centred approach informed by the needs of the individual
- An integrated, flexible, creative approach that acknowledges that one approach does not fit all individual needs or risks
- Effective, coordinated joint working across all partners
- An approach that reflects a shared understanding of the problem both operationally and strategically
- All partners sharing relevant information in a timely manner
- Needs-led, dynamic risk assessments that take account of emerging and changing risk and needs
- Rigorous monitoring, evaluation and accountability.
- The procedure does not replace individual agency or Sheffield Safeguarding Children's Board procedures and must not replace actions that workers should take to safeguard young people. It offers an additional risk management and coordination approach to complex and high-risk cases, locations and offenders.

### **Sexual Health Training**

- Training has been provided to children's home staff and foster carers which will support them to meet young people's sexual health needs covering carer's values, identification of where young people can access information

and support, understanding of consent, and the impact of pornography, social media and sexting

- Following the delivery of this training a review has been undertaken and the longer term aim is to offer rolling delivery of the training to other professionals.

### Reducing Re-Offending

9.4 The Youth Justice Service and the Community Youth Teams continue to work collaboratively to reduce the number of young people entering the criminal justice system and to reduce the risk of re-offending.

- Work to reduce offending by children who have been looked after for at least 12 months has been successful with **rates dropping significantly** from 14% (2011) to 5% (2017) **in-line** with SN 4% and core cities 6%.
- This includes incorporating the whole family approach within practice and the development of the new Intensive Family Support Team. It provides interventions to enable parents to build relationships, reduce problematic behaviour, learn parenting and other key skills, improve problem solving approaches and coping strategies.

### Community Youth Teams

9.5 Community Youth Teams provide a specialist youth support service for young people disengaged, or at risk of disengagement from education, training and employment, and those at risk of becoming involved in crime, anti-social behaviour, or gangs.

The priorities of the CYT are:

- To reduce first time entrants to the youth justice system
- To reduce youth-related anti-social behaviour
  - To reduce the number of young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET).
- The revised Community Youth Team criteria includes enhancing the offer for children in care (CiC) by bringing forward some of the key 'triggers' for referral such as referrals for young people following 2 fixed term exclusions instead of 3, to identify problems earlier to reduce the number of CiC entering the criminal justice system.



## **Reducing the use of custody**

- The Youth Justice Service has continued to work with all partners to deliver successfully a number of intensive supervision and surveillance programmes, tailored to each young person's situation and needs. The number of custodial sentences continues to decrease. There were five custodial sentences in 2016/17. The target for the year was not to exceed 11 custodial sentences, which was the total for 2015/16. This number is the lowest reported within the core cities statistical partners.

## **Children in Care & Youth Justice**

- The Youth Justice Service partnership has continued to embed restorative justice and restorative practice across children's services, and have developed and facilitated training for all children's homes managers to improve their knowledge around desistance and how they can work with young people and partners to strengthen the factors known to impact on desistance for young people.
- The Youth Justice Service and South Yorkshire Police have developed a Children in Care Police Officer role. The purpose of the role is to work alongside the YJS, children's home staff and foster carers to support children living in residential care, and to try and prevent young people from being criminalised for behaviour which can be dealt with more appropriately by other means.
- The number of children in the care of the local authority who received youth justice disposals reduced by 46% between 2016/17.

## **10 Priority 7 Care Leavers**

**10.1** Sheffield City Council is committed to supporting its care leavers to transition into independence by providing them with support, advice and guidance. The below performance data highlights current performance and our key areas that require improvement for our care leavers. There is a significant amount of work across the whole system to improve the offer and outcomes for this group of young people.

### **Performance Data**

- Not all young people have access to a Personal Advisor as required
- Education Employment and Training (ETE)- 152 of 321 of care leavers are not in EET.

- Only 42% of care leavers have an up to date pathway plan so statutory requirements are not always met and were there is a plan only 33% were completed within time
- 79% are in suitable accommodation.

### **Educational, Employment and Training outcomes**

**10.2** In 2017 there was an internal audit on care leavers employment education and training. This audit noted that whilst Sheffield has tried to increase the numbers of care leavers entering an apprenticeship, there have been too few referrals from the service and of those referred too many have 'failed' to proceed to a successful apprenticeship. As a city we need to address this issue as we are the corporate parents and the largest local employer.

**10.3** Given our continuing low numbers of care leavers engaged in education, employment and training we will be revisiting the arrangements for providing information advice & guidance to our care leavers including reviewing the Community Youth Teams work with the 16-18 age.

### **Accommodation current performance:**

**10.4** The majority of 18 year old in foster care are 'Staying Put' which is positive for those young people. This does create additional challenges for the Council in respect of costs however is good practice and supports young people achieve better outcomes. We currently support 50 staying put arrangements

- Local young people aged 16 + ( currently 45) are being placed outside the area as our 'in-house supported accommodation is nearing capacity
- When young people first leave care it is common for them to need substantial financial and practical help with accommodation. This tends to reduce as they get older, though care leavers are still disproportionate users of a range of housing support services.
- There is a small group of care leavers with multiple failed placements who are increasingly difficult to accommodate.
- 8% of care leavers are in accommodation deemed unsuitable. Unsuitable for the purpose of this measure would include custody, sofa surfing which accounts for the individual young people within our data.

### **What we achieved in 2016-17**

- The care leavers innovation and celebration event is held annually and is planned for October this year where there will be events during the month to coincide with national care leaver's week.
- Regular meetings take place with those responsible for adult learning to explore opportunities for the young people who are not in education

- employment or training (NEET). This has examined the training needs of current and future care leavers and a pathway has been developed to support suitability for employment.
- Last year we provided 10 care leavers with the opportunity for day stays or overnight stays in the 'trainer flats' provided by the Sheffield University. However, we need to develop a range of provision from our own 'in house' resource so that we are not dependant on short term availability from the university when they are not requiring their accommodation. We also developed our tenancy ready courses as part of the pathway plans and The role of the support workers has developed into young people's Personal Advisers in line with requirement laid out in the children and social work act 2017.
- We have worked with adult services to raise awareness of the issues for care leavers transitioning to adult services. This is an ongoing agenda issue as we support and encourage adult services to consider the needs of care leavers as a unique group for whom we have corporate parenting responsibility. We are looking at differences in service criteria to identify gaps and how we can work together to bridge this gap particularly for the 18-25yr olds. This includes work with adult's social care, adult mental health services and Housing Solutions. We have developed a positive pathway for 16+ year olds to work with private providers, voluntary organisations, housing solutions and Sheffield children's services.

## **11 Key findings for Scrutiny**

**11.1** The report above provides an overview of the current issues for children in care and care leavers within Sheffield. Whilst there is clear evidence of good and improving performance in some areas of our work we recognize that we have some significant challenges and are developing specific measures to address these in the revised strategy. We are set to change our approach in respect of key aspects of our work whilst remaining focused on the continuing priorities. Work has already begun to galvanise our workforce and partners to improve these outcomes and it is recognised throughout the service, and across the directorate, that improvements in the core provision are necessary. To ensure we are able to achieve this we have already secured some additional investment to both extend our workforce to meet the new demands of increased volume and to equip our workers with the resources they need to carry out their roles. However some of the improvements will be across the whole council and with partners, this is not something that a children and families services or peoples directorate can do in isolation.

**11.2** The results of our recent audits have identified that we have not engaged children and young people as successfully as we had hoped, though we remain committed to ensuring that we embed the voice of the child/care leaver within our services and will take this learning to our continuing work with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Union to achieve this.

The report highlights the following key point:

- Looked after child in Sheffield currently have worse educational outcome than comparators
- There are key areas where we must improve compliance with statutory requirements for children in care and care leavers
- Performance remains worse than comparators in some areas of health which we need to work on with our health colleagues
- Children and young people are being placed too far from home due to lack of available placements in our city
- There are not sufficient foster care placements to meet our current demand

## **12 Next actions**

**12.1** Recognising that our priorities remain the right priorities to achieve full compliance and improved performance we are setting out our renewed strategy and plans that will address these areas. The service improvement plan incorporates core actions underway to deliver improvements to strengthen sufficiency of placements and edge of care supports, along with ensuring that our social workers have the capacity to undertake the work required from them to support each child we have contact with. These changes to our approach and strategy to deliver better outcomes are subject to business cases and investment plans. They are designed to improve outcomes for children whilst addressing performance issues and reduce pressures on budgets.

**12.2** Although there are significant issues highlighted in this report, the process of disseminating this information to managers has begun, and staff are engaged in all efforts to ensure we deliver these required improvements. However, in Local Authorities that have made significant improvements with pace, they have done so with the support of the whole council and the corporate functions at its disposal.

**12.3** Following the Corporate Parenting Board this month it was confirmed that the Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2017/2020 will include a performance reporting framework to enable elected members and partners to maintain oversight, challenge and support to ensure that we achieve these required improvements. Future routine performance reporting to the board will complement the priority thematic areas that the board confirmed will be carried through in the 2017 - 2020 plan. The performance monitoring framework to the Board will be used to hold officers to account.



END

