



## Report to Policy Committee

### Author/Lead Officer of Report:

Meredith Dixon-Teasdale, Strategic Director of Children's Services

**Report of:** Meredith Dixon-Teasdale, Strategic Director of Children's Services

**Report to:** Education, Children and Families Policy Committee

**Date of Decision:** 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023

**Subject:** Update report from the Strategic Director of Children's Services

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>(Insert reference number)</i>				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				
<i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>				

### Purpose of Report:

The paper provides a Strategic Director's update on the performance and governance of Children's services, including progress in meeting DCS (Director of Children's Services) accountabilities and delivering on our statutory requirements. It also provides an update regarding progress in relation to the Council's Delivery Plan, key strategic events and issues on the horizon.

### Recommendations:

It is recommended that Education Children and Families Policy Committee:

1. Notes the Strategic Director of Children's Services report and agrees key activity for the coming months.

**Background Papers:**

Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member for Children’s Services

<b>Lead Officer to complete:-</b>	
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.
	Finance: Kayleigh Inman
	Legal: Nadine Wynter
	Equalities & Consultation: Climate:
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b> <i>Meredith Dixon-Teasdale</i>
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b> <i>Councillor Dawn Dale</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> <i>Meredith Dixon-Teasdale</i>
	<b>Job Title:</b> <i>Strategic Director, Children’s Services</i>
<b>Date:</b> 24 <sup>th</sup> October 2023	

## **1. PROPOSAL**

**1.1** This report starts with recognition and gratitude for all those working in children's and education system, who continue to work together to ensure our children and young people are safe, healthy, attaining and moving towards an independent adulthood.

### **1.2 Leadership and Partnership**

I have continued to establish good working relationships with Leaders across the system who work for or with children, young people and their families. I continue to lead on a number of Partnership Boards and also to attend others to ensure advocacy for children and young people. We have instigated the work of Impower to support us with changing how we operate for children and young people with SEND. I continue to explore with Corporate colleagues how we ensure the right funding is coming for children and young people and that we are making the best decision on how to use this resource to benefit children who are our most vulnerable or disadvantaged. Over the last few weeks I have had very good conversations with SY Police, Sheffield ICB, SYMCA, DCSs in other SY authorities and across Yorkshire and Humber and DfE.

Our focus as a Children's Service and also as an authority is on a Belonging Framework where we create a common vision and language to talk about how our children and young people belong in a loving family, in a local school that supports them, in a community that listens to and respects them and in a city that champions them.

I attended the School's Trauma Informed Conference where I saw fantastic evidence of how our leaders and staff in school are embracing a trauma informed approach which is impacting on our children and young people.

I have continued to meet with Headteachers to discuss the challenges in schools, particularly around our Special Educational Needs and Disability system and possible changes that will support better opportunities for our children and young people. I have also met with leaders in Sheffield Inclusion Centre who are supporting a large number of children who have been excluded from other schools.

My meetings with Learn Sheffield as a conduit for all schools in Sheffield have been fruitful and will, I am sure, mean that we are sharing the same vision and working to the same goals over the coming months and years. We have also focused on how we support more diverse governing bodies and the recruitment of teachers and leaders of colour from our local communities.

I have met with a number of leaders of colour and aspirant leaders and am working with them and Learn Sheffield to create a group where we can focus on this work. A meeting has been arranged for 7<sup>th</sup> November when this work will be progressed.

I continue to talk to colleagues in the NHS about how we share risk and resource for our most vulnerable young people whether that be for those who are neurodiverse, have Social Emotional and Mental health issues or are on the cusp of accessing mental health provision.

I am ensuring links with adult services to ensure we take a Team around the person approach and team around the family. This will progress over the coming months.

I also took part in the South Yorkshire Social Work Teaching Award Ceremony and learning event where a number of our staff in Sheffield won awards including the LADO team who were awarded second place in Team of the Year award.

## Over the coming months

I will continue to develop relationships and work to ensure that we have a common vision and plan for the children and young people in our city linked to the Our City Goals work. I will also continue to be a key advocate for all our children and young people. I am striving to be a clear visible leader where my mantra is that children and young people should belong in a loving family and stable home, they should belong in their local school, be a valued part of their local community where they are listened to and are key to decision making and are celebrated for the dynamism and innovation as key residents in the City of Sheffield.

### 1.3 Safeguarding

This continues to be a key focus. The overarching Sheffield Children's Safeguarding Board is well attended and creates a focus in this area across the city. A review of the profile and importance of Safeguarding in the City is currently taking place which will ensure we are in a strong position in the future.

A key focus for me is ensuring that the profile of Safeguarding is high in the Council and also the City. This will include ensuring that the profile of the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) is high and understood across all organisations that work with children and in the city.

Sheffield is doing well. There is a consistent demand for services within the city. The Sheffield Safeguarding Hub (our front door) responds to over 22,000 contacts per year of which over 5,100 are progressed to referral. With the last year over 4600 Early Help Assessments were undertaken, and 5,700 Social Work Assessments were undertaken in Sheffield.

Our ethos is that children should always remain at home when it is safe to do so, working with families means that the number of Looked After Children in the City has continued to decrease.

**Currently we have 655 Children Looked After which is a gradual decrease from 674 in 2021 Sheffield has the lowest rate of Looked After Children per 10k compared to other Core Cities at 57.2, other Core Cities range from this rat up to the highest at 172 per 10k.**

The low numbers of Looked After Children are maintained with a backdrop of an increase of Young Refugees (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children in the city) (). In 2017/18 there were 21 Young Refugees who were Looked After Children and 8 Care Leavers. In 2022/23 this number had increased to 69 Young refugees who were Looked After Children and 67 who are Care Leaver.

Over the last 2 – 3 years there has been a stark increase in the costs of placements. The average placement is £5400 per week However due to a limited number of places and profiteering within the independent care market, the most complex children can cost a great deal more. Whilst we have maintained our numbers, as we have stated costs have increased and there is a gap between the money received for UASC Care leavers and actual costs which is contributing pressure to a £2m overspend in the placement budget. We also have more costs for Special Guardianship Orders and kinship care with children and young people staying in their extended family. This is a positive shift as it provides greater security and opportunities.

We are working closely with Integrated Commissioning on ensuring that we regularly monitor, and quality assure all our contracted care and support provision including onsite visits to all providers, robust contract management, financial governance and care quality assurance. The last year has seen a particular focus on placements in scope of the National Review and on ensuring we have a grip on the welcome forthcoming changes that will extend regulation to include Supported Accommodation for young people aged 16-18 years. This includes working with existing providers to support them to become registered and working with the wider market to encourage a diverse and high-quality offer of appropriate registered care provision for Sheffield children who need it. This work has progressed well, and we are confident that we will be able to mitigate any risks to continuity of care for our children.

The National Review Phase 2 has also been completed and we are about to undertake a further round of visits to our remaining three placements that are in scope. This collaborative approach with colleagues from social care and health has been positively received by providers with action plans being delivered where providers have needed to make improvements and more effective relationships with providers who have recognised the value of our support and challenge approach to the review. We are looking to build on the success and learning of this work beyond the scope of the National Review and will provide further updates on this work in future DCS updates.

We have been looking at increasing the number of foster carers. This marketing is taking place now but at present our number of foster carers is remaining quite static. Nationally this has been an issue since the pandemic as older foster carers decide to exit the market and there is not the like for like recruitment to new foster carers. In the last few weeks, we have however begun to see greater interest from potential foster carers.

**Foster placements** have dropped from **71.0%** to **65.1%**, this has caused the major rise to the number of children placed in **children's homes and semi-independent living** from **19.0%** to **25.1%**, which is largely higher compared to our comparators. It is important that we continue to increase our special guardianship order and kinship care placements, increase our number of foster carers as well as review our in-house residential home provision.

#### **Over the next few months**

We will be reviewing the makeup of our placements for children coming into care as well as all our early intervention and prevention activity both within Children's Services but more broadly across the Council. Our focus will be to ensure all activity is having the required impact in stopping the escalation of need and being proactive to address issues with children, young people, families, and schools at the earliest opportunity.

#### **1.4 Vetting and barring scheme**

The lead members for each party for the Education, Children and Families Committee have asked me to work with Democratic Services and Legal to ensure that the right DBS checks are in place for all Elected Members especially as all Members are Corporate Parents. Work is ongoing to ensure the correct checks are in place and I will keep Committee updated on progress around this.

#### **1.5 Vulnerable children and young people**

We know that nationally our system and process for both assessing need for our children with special educational needs and disabilities and providing the right support is, at best, difficult. This picture is reflected in Sheffield with a high level of complaints and tribunals in

this space. There is an urgent need to look at how we do things to ensure that where children and young people have special needs there are interventions that help them address these issues and for all our children to have the same opportunities as their peers.

A review into our SEND process is coming to fruition and this will feed into work we are looking to undertake with IMPOWER to transform how we work in this space. This has very exciting possibilities and I will keep committee updated.

The SEND Accelerated Progress Plan has progressed well and was signed off by DfE and NHS England last month following a review that recognised the accelerated progress we had made on SEND Multi Agency Transitions to adulthood. Despite this 'sign off', we recognise as a system that the improvements for children and their families and carers requires further collaborative effort to embed so that every child and family experiences the benefits of improved multi agency working and able to achieve better outcomes as they move into adulthood. This focus will be continued as we retain the multi-agency approach in our response to the new SEND Inspection Framework and embed the outcomes framework developed through the SEN APP process.

We have recently commissioned Sheffield Inclusion Centre to accommodate more young people excluded from school. They are starting this term with around 220 pupils. We know that last year over 150 young people were permanently excluded from their school. Unless we are working together as a system to address these issues, we will not have the required places to meet the educational needs of excluded children. The Belonging Framework, which Joe Horobin (Director of Integrated Commissioning) and Andrew Jones (Director of Education and Skills) are leading on for the City, is an opportunity for us across this system to have a different conversation about alternative curriculums and provision, how we support schools to address issues of anxiety, how we ensure our neurodiverse young people can succeed in school, and how we are providing the right support for our children and young people who have social, emotional and mental health needs.

We are also focusing on how we support all our children and young people to be in school every day. That they see it not only as a place to learn, but also to socialise and gain greater opportunities. This needs a shift that the whole of Sheffield is embracing. We have been too long at the bottom of the table for our children and young people's attendance at school. Currently around 28% of our school age children and young people (aged 5-16) are missing out on education as they are not accessing a full-time education offer either due to absence, exclusion or reduced provision.

### **Over the coming months**

We will draft and share the Belonging Framework which will be a coproduced framework with key partners and stakeholders across the education, Health and VCS sector ensuring children and families voices are at the heart of it. We will focus across Sheffield on children attending school. We will look to get the right building blocks in place to transform our special educational needs and disability system ensuring as well that resources are in the right place to support this.

## **1.6 Fair access to school places**

As higher numbers of children move from primary into secondary, we are supporting parents to make the most informed decisions about the right place for their child in a system that has little space at present. We are doing this through targeted activity including contact with parents at the point of application. This pressure will ease as the higher number of children move through the school system. We are beginning to see more space in our primary sector whilst still seeing pressure in the secondary sector.

Through this process we are looking to ensure that families from different parts of the community are not impacted more than others and that families that need the most help to secure a local school place are offered support.

### **Over coming months**

Provide the right support at the right time for admissions to school at primary and secondary.

## **1.7 Educational excellence**

Early results reported by schools indicate that Sheffield school pupils GCSE results have remained similar to 2019 (the last comparable year due to pandemic changes).

Almost all schools have now provided information and the key headlines are as follows:

- a. Attainment 8 – the average points score is comprised from eight qualifying subjects.
  - o Sheffield has remained similar to 2019: 44.9 in 2019 to 44.4 in 2023. In comparison the National performance in 2019 was 46.7 and in 2023 is 46.5.
- b. English and Maths grade 4+ - the proportion of pupils achieving a pass at grade 4 or better in both subjects.
  - o Sheffield has improved from 59.5% in 2019 to 61.9% in 2023. National performance for this measure in 2019 was 64.6% and in 2023 was 65.5%.
- c. English grade 4+ - the proportion of pupils achieving a pass at grade 4 or better in English.
  - o Sheffield has improved from 70.8% in 2019 to 72.0% in 2023. In comparison National performance in 2019 was 75.8% and in 2023 is 75.9%.
- d. Maths grade 4+ - the proportion of pupils achieving a pass at grade 4 or better in Maths.
  - o Sheffield has improved from 65.2% in 2019 to 67.2% in 2023. In comparison National performance in 2019 was 70.0% and in 2023 is 70.8%.

Please note that these figures are still provisional and subject to change.

For information, grade 4 is the equivalent to a previous grade C and is used as the pass mark. Young people who do not achieve a grade 4 in either English or Maths are required to re-sit the qualification.

### **Over the coming months**

We will be undertaking a full review and working with Learn Sheffield and schools to assess how we continue to improve attainment and opportunities.

### 1.7.1 Quality of provision in schools

The quality of provision in Sheffield’s schools continues to improve, as reported by Ofsted. The proportion of schools with good or better judgments is above average compared to all schools nationally, all schools in core cities and all schools in local authorities which are statistical neighbours.

% Of All Schools Rated Good or Outstanding at 31/08/2023				
Area	Primary	Secondary	Special	All Schools
Core cities	91.5	76.6	86.4	88.5
National	90.0	81.4	89.3	88.7
Sheffield	93.2	76.7	81.8	89.3
Stat. neighbours	88.3	72.3	88.0	85.8

### 1.8 Early Years Overview

We continue to maintain an overview of the quality of provision both for the Early Years and Schools sectors. Clearly, funding to the sectors is a key factor which underpins quality of provision.

#### 1.8.1 Overview of PVI settings and Ofsted grades (as of 18/10/2023)

Current Group Care settings = 122 (including 2 maintained Schools) Childminders = 195

Ofsted Grade	Outstanding	Good	Require improvement	Inadequate	Newly registered	Met	Not met	Agency childminders
Group care Providers	23	87	3	2	7			
Child-minders	13	141	2	1	13	25	0	9 - @ home childcare 6 – Tiney Community

Group care providers – The 7 newly registered settings are made up of 4 new registrations and 3 re-registrations. 8 settings have been inspected recently and are awaiting publication of reports (unpublished grades are not reflected in above table).

Childminders – Included in the figures above are 14 childminders who are on the early years register but are either not minding early years children at the moment or have no early year’s children on their register at the moment. 4 childminders are not receiving support or engaging with LA – they are not FEL providers. We have 3 childminders who are temporarily inactive and 2 offering wraparounds only, 4 of these childminders are planning to resign their registration this year.

Annual reviews are offered and being carried out by the Quality Improvement team to ensure all providers are seen and offered support across the year.

#### 1.8.2 Overview of school early years settings and Ofsted grades

Two schools requiring improvement have declined support with no response since August 2022. There has been no contact with Early Years LA activity (i.e. no attendance at half termly briefings or on training offered, not subscribed to training package)



A third school requiring improvement has embraced support and engaging well and subscribed to our offer.

Bespoke staff training has been delivered over Autumn 1 term to a fourth school requiring improvement. Dates are planned over the academic year as part of the support plan. The school have also subscribed to our training offer.

One school remains Inadequate and are fully engaging with the team, subscribed to our training offer and training has also been bought in for SLT and senior leads to support their (EYFS Knowledge)

All schools now have an allocated Quality and Access Officer who contacts them termly to check in and offer support if needed outside of the traded subscription offer.

Traded subscription – we have 20 PVI settings, 36 academies and 43 maintained schools subscribed to our training offer.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?**

**2.1** This gives line of sight to committee members about activity being undertaken in children Services, specifically the work being undertaken by the DCS and priorities for the next period between committees.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

**3.1** The purpose of this report is to provide an update in relation to Children Services.

**3.2** Consultation is undertaken during the development of proposals for the budget and implementation of proposals for the budget as appropriate.

**3.3** An overall approach to coproduction and involvement is also a key element of the delivery plan, ensuring that the voice of our children and Young People is heard and young people are happy who have the start they need for the future they want

## **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **4.1 Equality Implications**

**4.1.1** Reducing risk of committee members not being aware of the activity undertaken in children Services. Providing clarity and purpose and ensuring assurance whilst highlighting any risks

### **4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications**

**4.2.1** No financial and Commercial implications

### **4.3 Legal Implications**

**4.3.1** No legal implications as no formal policy and proposals

### **4.4 Climate Implications**

**4.4.1** No Climate implications

### **4.5 Other Implications**

**4.5.1** There are no specific other implications for this report

**5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

**5.1** Not applicable – no decision or change is being proposed

**6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

**6.1** This report provides an update regards Children’s Services activities for Members.