



## 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:** 19<sup>th</sup> December 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 (<b>report/appendix</b>) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (<b>insert relevant paragraph number</b>) 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 have taken a paper with Health Colleagues to the Sheffield Health Care Partnership to look at how we prioritise children's health and early intervention looking to prioritise work to ensure children and their families start well – linking to the Safe Sleep work of SYCA; how we ensure there is a good team around the provider to support more children and young people to attend their local school when they have a neurodiverse need of Social Emotional and mental health need; and, how we share risk and resource around providing good children's homes for our most complex and vulnerable children.

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. This paper is within the Committee agenda allowing us all to shape this Policy.

I had an inaugural meeting with headteachers about race equality which has been very productive. We discussed the need for comprehensive training which was grounded in Sheffield and local communities; that we need to focus on recruitment and retention of our staff and leaders of colour in schools. We also discussed how we share good practice across the City on how schools are providing a diverse and appropriate curriculum for our diverse cohort of children and young people in school. This meeting will meet on a 6 weekly. The meeting also highlighted how we also have this discussion in our early years as well.

I am also committed to organising a reverse scrutiny of the Race Equality Plans with the group of young people who visited our Committee – this is still being arranged.

I attended with Cllr Dale and Cllr Argenzio the National Children's and Adult Conference in Bournemouth. We heard from current ministers and shadow ministers on their plans and focus on children and young people over coming years as well as gaining a lot of information about good practice in other places. Sheffield and its work in both children and adults were celebrated in a number of sessions including around our work on early help.

On arriving in the Council I commissioned a piece of work which was to give assurance that whilst children's services duties are spread across the Council that I, as DCS, and Cllr Dale as Lead Member for Children's Services can have assurance that we have line of sight for our duties. This review was undertaken by Edwina Grant and her review is here. Xxxxx

I am working with Democratic Services to ensure that we have both meetings between Cllr Dale and Cllr Williams and planned meetings between Neighbourhoods and ECF particularly where it relates to Youth Services, Family Hubs, Home to School Transport and listening to young people.

## 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 Partnership' quarterly Executive Group 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.

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. In our recent Ofsted inspection it was acknowledged the demand on services due to information being shared which had not been subject to police triage. We are working with South Yorkshire police and other South Yorkshire authorities to quality assure the information provided by the police. Quality assurance of all vulnerable child referrals has taken place for 2 weeks starting last week November. The outcome of this will help to plan future ways of working with our partners.

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.

Sheffield continues have very low numbers of children who are looked after. The good practice in our legal proceedings when a child cannot live at home was recognised by Ofsted and we are currently working with South Yorkshire authorities to progress a regional approach to family courts and have sought funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to support this.

Placement costs continue to be a pressure in children's services. In the last month we have seen the regulation of semi-independent placements which have impacted on placement costs. We will continue to monitor this and are working with colleges nationwide to address the issue nationally.

Additionally, we are working closely with integrated commissioning, developing a needs assessment which will influence our sufficiency strategy. Childrens services and integrated commissioning are developing a clear and robust plan to ensure clear monitoring of all our placements for children and young people including wrap around support and scrutiny for in house children's home.

We continue to actively seek foster carers and currently working on a new communication strategy which will go live in 2024. We continue to be really busy in the fostering service, assessing connected carers. We are proud of our high rates of connected carers ensuring children remain within their natural networks.

As part of Children and Families ongoing commitment to provide children in care with the right homes in Sheffield, Children and Families completed a successful bid to the Department for Education to expand our in-house Children's Residential Home provision. The bid is match funded and the council match was contribution of land to enable the development.

The project will deliver a new build 2 bed children's home which can scale up to 3 beds in space identified at the site in Ecclesall Ward. The home will provide placements for children and young people with complex learning difficulties and disabilities, completing the existing provision on the site.

The development supports Sheffield's Placement Sufficiency Strategy in the following ways:

- The smaller home environment will enable staff to provide closer and more focussed relationship and strengths-based support to our young people. It will provide an environment that has a family home feel to support young people to be safe.
- Increases sufficiency for children with the most complex needs whose presenting risks, vulnerabilities and needs are not compatible with larger group living.
- Addresses shortfalls in the local area. Sheffield does not currently operate any smaller children's homes and over the last 18 months has experienced increasing challenge in sourcing placements for young people with a high level and complexity of need. This has led to young people being cared for in larger homes operating at a reduced capacity further reducing sufficiency in the local area.

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

We continue to have a clear focus on ensuring our children and young people live in high quality placements within Sheffield. We are working to create our strategy for children's homes in the city to ensure we are able to meet the needs of children in the coming years.

#### **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. Democratic Services are in the process of completing DBS request forms for HR in order for them to be able to progress the issue. A separate form needs to be completed for each role and should be accompanied by a job description or role profile. Role profiles for Members are currently being created and will need to be agreed by Governance Committee.

#### **1.5 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 reduced slightly compared to 2019: 44.9 in 2019 to 43.9 in 2023. In comparison the National performance in 2019 was 46.7 and in 2023 is 46.2.
- b. Progress 8 – the score establishes whether average progress is above or below the expected level.
  - o Sheffield’s Progress 8 score has remained similar to 2019: -0.03 in 2019 compared to -0.09 in 2023. In comparison the National average has remained the same at -0.03.
- c. 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 61.0% in 2023. National performance for this measure in 2019 was 64.6% and in 2023 was 65.0%.
- d. 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 71.0% in 2023. In comparison National performance in 2019 was 75.8% and in 2023 is 75.0%.
- e. 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 66.0% in 2023. In comparison National performance in 2019 was 70.0% and in 2023 is 70.0%.

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.

#### 1.5.1 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.

<b>% Of All Schools Rated Good or Outstanding at 31/10/2023</b>				
<b>Area</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Special</b>	<b>All Schools</b>
<b>Core cities</b>	91.6	77.9	88.1	88.8
<b>National</b>	90.4	81.9	89.3	89.1
<b>Sheffield</b>	94.0	76.7	81.8	89.8
<b>Stat. neighbours</b>	88.8	73.0	88.0	86.2

## 1.6 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 sector is a key factor which underpins quality of provision and sustainability of the workforce.

### 1.6.1 Overview of PVI (Private, Voluntary and Independent) settings and Ofsted grades (as of 23/11/2023)

Current Group Care settings = 122 (including 2 maintained Schools) Childminders = 196

Ofsted Grade	Outstanding	Good	Require improvement	Inadequate	Newley registered	Met	Not met	Agency childminders
Group care Providers	22	89	2	2	7			
Child-minders	12	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.

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 Local Authority – they are not FEL (Funded Early Learning) 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. The Quality Improvement Team monitor this by contact calls as well as working with Ofsted and Childcare Planning, sharing updates of resignations or information shared by the provider.

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. These are proving to be useful for both providers and Quality Improvement Team, reconnecting with all our providers and offering them one to one support (previously only offered to newly registered providers and those who were in an Ofsted category). Reviews are an opportunity to work with the provider of on EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) Statutory Requirements, learning and development opportunities (including learning environment and provision), signpost or support referrals to other agencies as well as signpost to or offer CPD (Continuous Professional Development) opportunities.

One funded place for every childminder, nursery, and school across the city to access the 'Understanding the Needs of Babies and Young Children with Special Educational Needs and Disability SEN (Special Educational Needs) Level 2 Qualification' has been offered and our first cohort of learners have begun their training. We have 3 members of the Early Years Quality teams licenced to deliver this training to support the sector with the increasing SEND demand within settings. We are also funding 13 places on the Level 3 SENCo Award Qualification to the PVI sector. We have 1 member of the team licenced to deliver this qualification (this is our 8th cohort of delivery since 2019).

## **1.6.2 Overview of school early years settings and Ofsted grades (as of 23/11/23)**

2 schools with EYFS requiring improvement are continuing to decline support from the Early Years Quality and Access Team, choosing to work with their academy quality improvement networks.

1 school is receiving bespoke support since receiving their requires improvement grading. The school have accessed whole staff training, support, and action planning for their EYFS lead and have regular contact calls and visits from their allocated Quality and Access Officer. The school are accessing training for their team to access through our traded service subscription.

2 schools who were in an Ofsted category have converted to academy status, however they are still receiving long arm support from our team and are subscribed to the traded service subscription.

All schools 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. EYFS Leads and coordinators across the city are engaging well with allocated officers, they are more informed of the Early Years Quality and Access team offer, we have carried out more face-to-face visits therefore developing relationships between us and schools. Attendance on training and briefings has increased and information is being shared regularly with the sector (for example, LA specific information, local and national headlines as well as opportunities and key messages from the DfE).

Traded subscription – 22 PVI settings, 1 childminder, 37 academies and 43 maintained schools subscribed to our training offer. A few settings are purchasing additional training days as well as those purchased through subscriptions.

## **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.

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