

***CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
Agenda***

Date Thursday 27 November 2025

Time 6.00 pm

Venue J R Clynes Second Floor Room 1 - The JR Clynes Building

Notes 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST- If a Member requires advice on any item involving a possible declaration of interest which could affect his/her ability to speak and/or vote he/she is advised to contact Alex Bougatef or Constitutional Services at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

2. CONTACT OFFICER for this agenda is Constitutional Services or email [constitutional.services@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:constitutional.services@oldham.gov.uk)

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS - Any Member of the public wishing to ask a question at the above meeting can do so only if a written copy of the question is submitted to the contact officer by 12 noon on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

4. FILMING - The Council, members of the public and the press may record / film / photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded. Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Constitutional Services Officer who will instruct that they are not included in the filming.

Please note that anyone using recording equipment both audio and visual will not be permitted to leave the equipment in the room where a private meeting is held.

Recording and reporting the Council's meetings is subject to the law including the law of defamation, the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act and the law on public order offences.

Please also note the Public attendance Protocol on the Council's Website

[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/homepage/1449/attending\\_council\\_meetings](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/homepage/1449/attending_council_meetings)

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD**

Councillors Adams, Z Ali, Ball, Bishop, Byrne, Hobin (Chair), Iqbal, Malik, McLaren (Vice-Chair), Rustidge and Shuttleworth

Item No

- 1 Apologies For Absence
- 2 Urgent Business  
Urgent business, if any, introduced by the Chair
- 3 Declarations of Interest  
To Receive Declarations of Interest in any Contract or matter to be discussed at the meeting.
- 4 Public Question Time  
To receive Questions from the Public, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- 5 Minutes of Previous Children and Young People Scrutiny Board Meeting (Pages 3 - 6)  
The Minutes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board held on 30<sup>th</sup> September are attached for approval.
- 6 Performance Assurance Report Q1 and Q2 2025/26 (Pages 7 - 48)  
Report detailing the corporate performance indicators for the first and second quarters of 2025/26.
- 7 Annual Report Complex Safeguarding Hub 2024/25 (Pages 49 - 82)  
To note the report.
- 8 Children's Services - update on Financial Performance, Action Plan and Transformation and Sustainability Programme (Pages 83 - 92)  
To note the report and progress to date.
- 9 Work Programme (Pages 93 - 98)  
To note the 2025/26 Scrutiny Board work programme.
- 10 Key Decision Document (Pages 99 - 108)
- 11 Rule 13 and 14  
To consider any rule 13 or 14 decisions taken since the previous meeting.

**Present:** Councillor McLaren (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)  
Councillors Z Ali, Bishop, Byrne, Hughes, Iqbal, Rustidge and Shuttleworth

Also in Attendance:

Matthew Bulmer	Director Education Early Years and Skills
Katie Charlton	Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion
Julie Daniels	Executive Director, Children and Young People
Anthony Decrop	Children's Services - Oldham Borough Council
Sheila Garara	Children's Services
Jack Grennan	Constitutional Services
Shaid Mushtaq	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Umar Nasheen	Deputy Cabinet Member for Skills

1        **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ball and Councillor Hobin.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Mohon Ali as Cabinet Member, with Councillor Nasheen attending.

2        **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3        **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4        **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5        **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

6        **SEND UPDATE**

Katie Charlton introduced the report, noting that the purpose of the report was to highlight the progress made since January 2025. It was noted that a white paper was expected soon on SEND from the government. It was highlighted that 92% of local area partnership actions had been completed.

There had been an 87% increase in EHCPs in Oldham, with 6.7% of pupils in the borough now having one, which was around 3900 children. It was noted that wait times for CAMHS had reduced and was much improved. It was highlighted that

there had been low numbers of exclusions which was testament to the work being done and that investment in services had supported this work. It was highlighted that the service was now leaving a period of recovery and was heading towards transformation.

Members queried why numbers of ECHPs were higher in Oldham than regionally. It was advised that it was a hypothesis that better early help work would avoid statutory plans. It was noted that previous long waits had led to EHCPs being used to meet needs. It was noted that the rate of increase in EHCPs was lower than historic, and a lower rate of increase than both national and regional.

Members also asked what the council was doing well and whether good practice was being shared across GM. It was noted that officers were attending GM meetings and sharing good practice. The Change Partnership programme was also noted, and the alternative provision taskforce could refer pupils near to exclusion as part of a proactive offer.

Members noted they had been encouraged by school attendance information from district meetings and officers noted that this was important intelligence for the service. The Chair requested that members write to officers to note comments and successes going forward.

Members asked that whilst the most common type of need for children and young people with an ECHP was autism, were there any forms of SEND that were significant. It was noted that SLCN was a significant area of need and other areas of need were too.

RESOLVED: That members note the report and commend officers for their work.

7

## **OLDHAM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLAN 2025-26**

Sheila Garara presented the report, noting the 4Ps (Practice, Partnership, People and Place) for Children's social care and early help, and that these would help form the action plans. It was also noted that these would lead to significant improvements in SEND. It was highlighted that KPIs would be reported quarterly, with both Q1 and Q2 expected to come to the scrutiny board in November 2025.

The Risk register was noted, and it was mentioned that none of these risks had been realised. It was noted that the focused inspection noted that the plan was ambitious and aspirational and would address presenting challenges.

Members noted school inclusivity and questioned what the council could do with academies, where the council has limited influence. It was noted that every child who wants a place gets one, and that 97.8% of primary school children got their 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> choice, whilst this was 93.3% in secondary. It was noted that schools had sufficiency, with an 11% surplus in primary school

places. It was highlighted that councils have statutory powers to add children into schools as part of in year fair access, and that schools had no choice on looked after placements.

Members also noted birth rates and the impact of the pandemic. It was noted that the impact was hitting primary schools now, but that there was spare capacity so there would be no need to close schools. It was noted that the post-16 bulge would reach its peak in 2029 and 2030.

Members were informed that in case conferences, partners were attending around 90%.

Members queried what the 75% complaints target meant in real numbers. It was noted that 75% was just a target but that in April to June there had been 46 complaints received. It was queried whether there were themes from these complaints, and it was advised that they were mainly around communications with families and disagreeing with the decisions. Members requested a breakdown of complaints for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: To commend the plan to Full Council

8

#### **WORK PROGRAMME**

RESOLVED: That the draft 2025/26 Work Programme be noted and approved

9

#### **RULE 13 AND 14**

There were no Rule 13 or 14 decisions to be considered.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.35 pm

This page is intentionally left blank



## **Report to Children & Young People Scrutiny Board**

### **Performance Assurance Report 2025/26 Q1 (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025) and Q2 (1st July to 30th September 2025)**

**Portfolio Holder (Performance):** Cllr Arooj Shah, Leader & Cabinet Member for Growth

**Report Owner:** Julie Daniels, Executive Director

**Officer Contact:** Steve Hughes, Assistant Director Strategy & Transformation

**Overview Report Author:** Gail M. Stott, Performance Improvement Lead, Strategy & Performance

**PAR collated by:** Performance Improvement Team and Data & Intelligence Service, Strategy & Performance

**Contact:** [StrategyandPerformance@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:StrategyandPerformance@oldham.gov.uk)

**Date:** 27.11.2025

---

---

## Reason for decision

The Council's Performance Management Framework (PMF) underpins how we measure progress and monitor the impact of the Corporate Plan objectives. It is aligned to our Medium-Term Financial Strategy, and the outcomes will increasingly become the focus for our budget, Directorate and Service Plans.

The Framework provides measurable evidence of progress against objectives as part of a systematic process of robust corporate performance reporting to provide assurance that:

- services are aligned to corporate priorities and the needs of our residents
- our services are good, or are on track to good
- any services that are not on track, or have identified risks, are being supported or challenged appropriately
- any demand indicators or resource pressures are noted, and service provision is being re-assessed accordingly.

## Report summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of directorate performance against agreed service plan measures and in the context of related reports and open (public) data. The intent is to support the scrutiny process through open and transparent discussion and challenge.

The reporting format is being developed as various overarching frameworks (national, regional and local) and digital reporting and data storytelling options emerge. The aim is to achieve a level of consistency of reporting, however, there will be some nuances in how and when we implement the framework and reporting styles used in each of the four scrutiny boards.

## Recommendations

Scrutiny Board members are asked to:

- note the directorate outcomes identified
- celebrate areas of good or improved performance
- consider areas for review (good or poor) that would produce organisational learning.

Contextual considerations include:

- the interconnection between key projects and ongoing activities in other portfolio and Scrutiny Board areas
- the Council's performance reporting in the public domain – in particular the [LG Inform App](#) and [Draft Local Government Outcomes Framework for Oldham](#)
- the importance of viewing performance in the context of our borough by utilising published [district profiles](#) and the [Oldham JSNA](#).



---

## 1. Context

1.1 Directorate service / business plans include a range of performance metrics to monitor progress in achieving the Corporate Plan objectives, statutory duties and putting our residents first.

1.2 Ongoing monitoring is important because services can be impacted by a range of internal and external factors, including changes in demand, resources, legislation or policies.

1.3 It is essential that performance is viewed in the context of our borough - the published district profiles and the Oldham JSNA provide more detail and these statistics and projections need to be considered when reviewing current and projected service levels and demands.

1.4 Performance management systems that generate data are utilised at all levels; good governance processes support a transparent performance reporting cycle.

1.5 As part of our performance management framework, each directorate has regular opportunities to review their performance at a service level and more holistically; and to raise issues or concerns or take necessary actions to improve or maintain it. Data scrutinised at this level will be more detailed and focused on the service or function.

1.6 The Performance Assurance Reports (PAR) enables key (high-level) data to be scrutinised to provide reassurance, whilst also allowing space for discussion. The format of these reports is evolving as the council navigates its digital journey. The aspiration is to offer a balance between data, insight and contextual narrative.

1.7 A standardised 'one size fits all' approach to performance monitoring and reporting is not feasible across the range and complexity of services the council provides. Some services produce data that is qualitative and readily benchmarked against milestones. To remain relevant, they need to be set in an appropriate timeframe – for example education services data needs to be reported termly, as opposed to in financial year quarters. Similarly, some strategic programmes, such as public health initiatives, will only show meaningful results over several years.

1.8 Many core services provide a supporting role so performance within their functions cannot be measured quantitatively and success is identified by the performance of the services they support. To avoid repetitive or inaccurate reporting for these services, performance reporting may only occur at the beginning and the close of the year when major milestones can be effectively and accurately reflected on.

### ***Appendices:***

#### **Children & Families Directorate Data pack and narrative:**

- **Children's social care**
- **Education & skills**
- ***Youth Services (part of Communities Directorate)***

This page is intentionally left blank

# Performance Assurance Report: Children & Young People

Quarter 2 – 1st July 2025 to 30th September 2025

***Portfolio holder (Performance):*** Cllr Arooj Shah, Leader of the Council

***Cabinet member for Children and Young People:*** Cllr Shaid Mushtaq

***Cabinet member for Education & Skills:*** Cllr Mohon Ali

***Cabinet member for Enterprise:*** Cllr Fida Hussain

***Report owner:*** Julie Daniels, Executive Director Children & Young People

***Officer contact:*** Steve Hughes, Assistant Director of Strategy & Transformation

**Report to Children & Young People Scrutiny Board:** 27th November 2025

# Directorate overview

The Council is split into four key executive directorate areas; Place, Resources, **Children & Young People** and Health & Care.

The Children & Young People directorate is overseen by Julie Daniels, **Executive Director Children & Young People** and consists of two directorates:

- Children's Social Care & Early Help overseen by **Anthony Decrop, Director of Children's Social Care & Early Help**
- Education, Early Years & Skills overseen by **Matthew Bulmer, Director of Education, Early Years & Skills**

Youth Services sit within the Communities directorate, overseen by **Neil Consterdine, Director of Communities**.

# Quarter 2 introduction: Julie Daniels, Executive Director, Children & Young People

This quarter's performance reflects the continued dedication across our services to deliver high-quality outcomes for children, young people, and families. Despite workforce pressures and rising complexity in safeguarding, we've seen improvements in our response to complaints, repeat referrals, internal placements, health assessments, and workforce stability as well as continued strong performance in education attendance and inclusion.

Our focus remains on strengthening safeguarding multi-agency collaboration and improving placement stability and EHCP annual reviews.

*Julie Daniels, Executive Director of Children & Young People*

# Balanced scorecard metrics

*Customer Experience | Workforce | Finance | Access to information*

# Customer Experience

Customer Metrics* - Metrics taken from services using 8x8 to log calls and so do not represent all of Children's Social Care	Oldham Council Q2 Customer	Children's Q2 Customer
Number of calls	76,991	2379
Numbers of calls answered	66,080	1690
Average handling time	0:07:48	0:08:10
Average wait time	0:07:17	0:12:52
Post Call Customer Satisfaction Surveys	91.95%	82.98%
Complaints Metrics	Oldham Council Q2 Complaints	Children's Q2 Complaints
Received	168	55
Completed within Target	81	23
Overdue (Open/Late)	12	0
Compliments Metrics	Oldham Council Q2 Compliments	Children's Q2 Compliments
Number of Compliments*	72	9

\* Not all compliments can be logged by Directorate due to lack of information so individual directorate figures will not equal overall compliment figure

# Workforce

Workforce Metric	Oldham Council Q1	Oldham Council Q2	Children & Young People Q2
Headcount*	2595	2618	1006
Sickness Absence %	6.2%	5.04%	13%
Turnover rolling 12 month %	12.9%	12.7%	13%
Agency Spend Year to Date M4	£4.23m	£4.02m	£1.41m
Appraisals/Let's Talk		75.9%	75.7%

\*Overall Headcount is measured on distinct posts, so removes numbers of people with multiple roles. Hence this number is lower than the sum of Directorate headcount



# Access to information

Governance Metrics	Target	Oldham Council Q2 Overall	Children & Young People Q2
Number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received		401	63
FOIs answered within statutory time period	90%	90 (89%)	42 (66%)
Number of Subject Access Requests (SARs) received		108	56
SARs answered within statutory time period	80%	40 (62.5%)	10 (17%)
Number of Requests for Service received		244	98
Number of Requests for Service responded to within Target time period	80%	217 (89%)	80 (81%)

# Children's Social Care & Early Help

- Early Help
- Family Hubs
- Domestic Abuse
- Family Decision Making
- MASH & EDT
- Complex Safeguarding
- Assessment & Intervention
- Safeguarding & Care Planning
- Residential
- Fostering & Adoption
- Children with Additional and Complex Needs & Short Breaks
- Family Centres
- Children in Our Care
- Leaving Care
- Independent Review
- OSCP
- LADO
- Workforce Academy
- Business Services, Strategy and Improvement
- Children's Commissioning

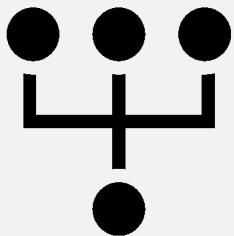
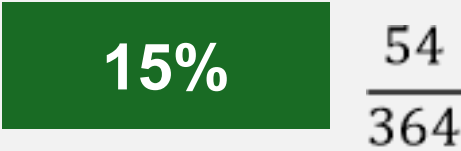
# Introduction: Director of Children's Social Care & Early Help

It is positive to see that improvement against key indicators continues to be maintained and exceeded in some critical areas with the vast majority of indicators now green with just 1 red and 2 amber. This success can partially be attributed to the ongoing progress in securing a stable workforce with the use of agency staff being its lowest for several years alongside a reduction in staff turnover. The strategy of focussing on creating a stable social care workforce has clearly evidenced the positive results this brings to children & families.

The hard work of Fostering, Residential and Commissioning Services has supported the sustained improvement of the number of children looked after placed in internal provision and care leavers in suitable accommodation in turn impacting positively on their engagement in employment, education and training.

*Tony Decrop, Director Children's Social Care & Early Help*

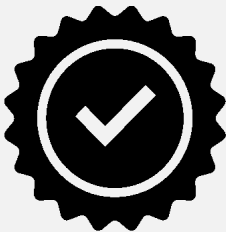
% of referrals which are repeat referrals to Children's Social Care (in month)



Previous Quarter  
Q1: 18%

**Target = 21%**

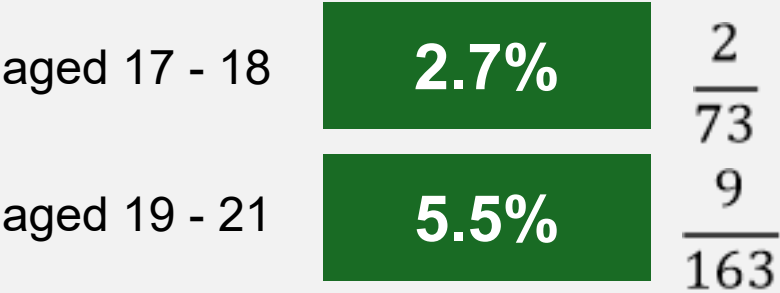
% of children in families closed with all issues addressed (excludes worklessness)



Previous Quarter  
Q1: 96%

**Target = 75%**

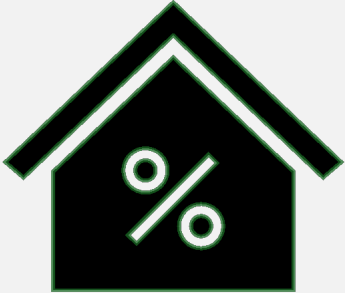
% of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation



Previous Quarter  
Q1: 4.1% (17-18) Q1: 2.3% (19-21)

**Target = 8% (17-18) | 6% (19-21)**

% of children looked after placed within in-house provision

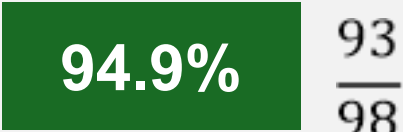


Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 55.4%

Target = 55%

[Green] High is Good

% of children looked after that have a permanence plan recorded at second review



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 96.8%

Target = 85%

[Green] High is Good

% of children looked after with an up-to-date annual health assessment



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 85.8%

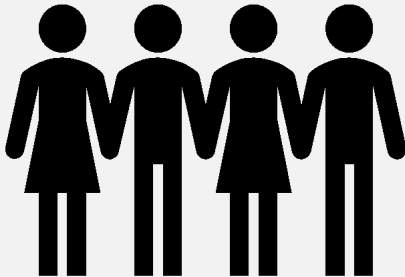
Target: 80%

[Green] High is Good

% of agency social workers  
in children's social care

19.4%

$\frac{53}{274}$



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 23%

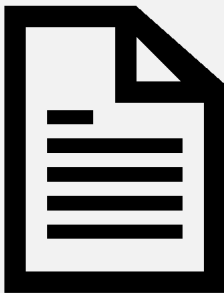
Target = 25%

[Green]

Low is Good

Average number of cases  
per social worker

17.1



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 17.2

Target = 17

[Green]

Low is Good

Rate of registered social  
worker turnover

14%

$\frac{29}{207}$



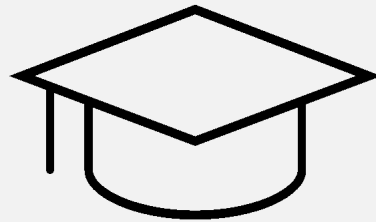
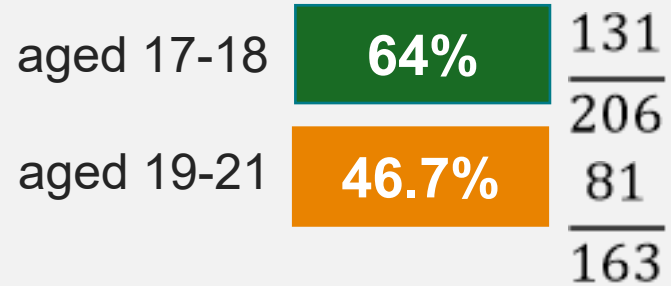
Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 17.6%

Target = no target

[no target]

Low is Good

% of care leavers in education,  
employment or training



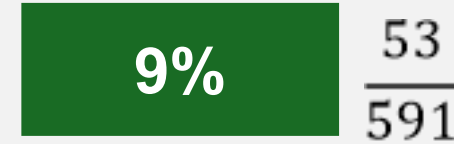
Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 61.6% (17-18) | 46.2% (19-21)

*Target = 63% (17-18) | 48% (19-21)*

[Amber]

High is Good

% of children looked after with  
three or more placement moves  
in the last 12 months



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 10.5%

*Target = 10%*

[Green]

Low is Good

% of child protection plans starting which were a second or subsequent plan

33%

$\frac{45}{137}$



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 31%

*Target = 26%*

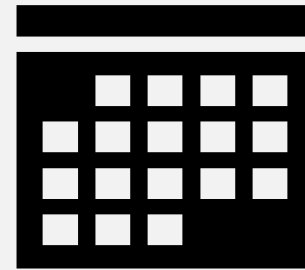
[Red]  
Good

Low is

% of children looked after in long term stable placements

64%

$\frac{131}{206}$



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 64.7%

*Target = 67%*

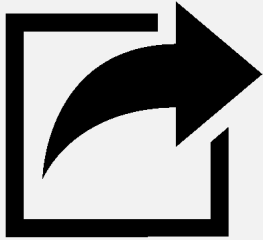
[Amber]  
Good

High is



Rate of referrals into  
children's social care per  
10,000 children aged under  
18 years

**631**



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 638

*Target = no target*

Rate of CPP per 10,000  
children aged under 18  
years old

**66.7**



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 64.7

*Target = no target*

Rate of children looked  
after per 10,000 children  
aged under 18 years old

**93.8**



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 94.4

*Target = no target*

# Development areas across the directorate

<b>Percentage of child protection plans starting which were a second or subsequent plan</b>	<p>The number of child protection plans starting with a subsequent plan has increased slightly from last quarter. This performance has been driven by several large sibling groups. This is a priority area of focus to ensure that we are driving purposeful child protection planning across the service. The conference team manager is undertaking thorough analysis of all children with repeat child protection planning and there is senior multi agency child protection panel oversight.</p> <p>The Families First Partnership Programme reforms will provide opportunities for strengthening multi agency child protection arrangements over the next two years.</p>
<b>Percentage of children looked after in long term stable placements</b>	<p>There has been a gradual improvement in the performance over time. The measure is for children in care for over 2½ years and in the same placement for over two years, therefore improvement has to be observed over longer periods of time. The service has 'long term matched' more children to their foster carer this year than any of the previous four years and continues to track children with plans to achieve long term match. The service has worked hard to improve their internal sufficiency, with more children in internal foster care and an increase in the number of internal residential beds.</p> <p>The service is developing a revised Approach to Kinship and Permanency Policy which will enable Social Workers with tools and guidance to progressing permanency options for children, including ensuring the full use of support options for keeping or returning children to their family members.</p>

# Reflections from Cabinet Member

It's encouraging to see strong progress in key areas such as internal placements, health assessments for children looked after and care leavers NEET. The reduction in agency staff and improved workforce stability are signs of a more sustainable service. While repeat child protection plans require careful monitoring, we know and understand how large sibling groups can disproportionately impact on when measuring a small cohort of children. Our strong multi-agency response and strategic reforms underway show our commitment to helping and safeguarding every child effectively.

*Councillor Shaid Mushtaq*

Cabinet member for Children and Young People

# Education, Early Years & Skills

- SEND and Inclusion
- Specialist Services
- Education Support Services
- Virtual School
- Early Years
- Music Service
- School Improvement
- Employment and Skills
- Post-16
- Lifelong Learning
- Business Services, Strategy & Improvement
- Children's Commissioning
- LA Maintained Schools

# Introduction from the Director of Education, Early Years & Skills

## **Improving NEET Rates**

We are strengthening our collective approach to post-16 transitions by improving data sharing and early identification of young people at risk of becoming NEET. Closer coordination between schools, colleges, enabling targeted outreach and re-engagement support. Through the refreshed Post-16 Partnership Board, we are ensuring greater accountability and consistent tracking across partners. Alignment with Get Oldham Working and our local skills programmes will expand access to apprenticeships, vocational routes, and mentoring. Particular emphasis is being placed on improving outcomes for care leavers and young people with SEND, ensuring every young person has a clear pathway into education, employment, or training.

## **Improving EHCP Annual Review Timeliness**

We have approval for additional staffing into the SEND service to assist with the increasing number of annual reviews that require co-ordination. We continue to focus on those annual reviews where they are needed most, for instance, transition years and where the needs of the child have substantially changed.

*Matt Bulmer, Director of Education, Early Years and Skills*

Pass rate of learners completing life learning courses

98.5%

Quarterly



Previous Term:  
Q1: 95.4%

Target = 95%

[Green]  
Good

High is

% children receiving their 1-3 preference of school place for the September intake

Reception	97.83%	2668
		2727
Year 7	93.55%	3033
		3242

Annual  
25/26  
intake



Previous Year:  
24/25: 98.8% (Reception) | 92.5% (Year 7)

Target = 97% (Reception) | 92% (Year 7)

[Green]  
Good

High is

% of 16 to 17-year-olds destination lapsed/unknown

1.25%

Sept 25



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 1.25%

Target = 1.5%

[Green]

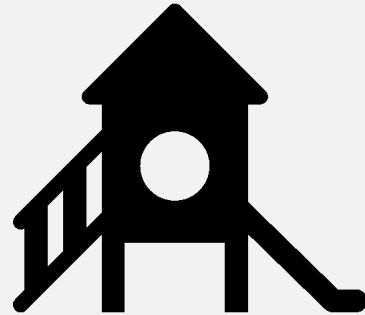
Low is Good

% take up of 3 & 4 year-old children  
benefiting from funded early education  
places

**92.1%**

$\frac{6016}{6534}$

Summer  
term 25



Previous Term:  
Q1: 95.3%

*Target = 90%*

[GREEN]

High is Good

% take up of 2 year old's from working  
families benefiting from a funded early  
education place

**114.8%**

$\frac{1037}{903}$

Summer  
Term 25



Previous Term:  
Q1: 119.3%

*Target = 75%*

[GREEN]

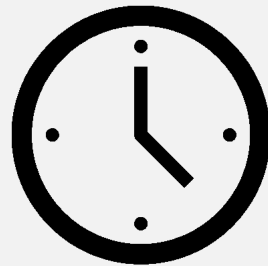
High is Good

Timeliness of EHC plans: %  
completed within 20 weeks over 12  
months

**87.3%**

$\frac{137}{157}$

Sept 25



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 87.5%

*Target = 80%*

[GREEN]

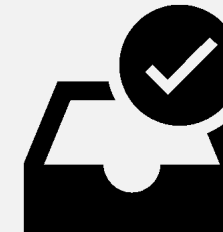
High is Good

Annual EHCP (SEND) statutory  
reviews completed within legal  
timeframe

**60.3%**

$\frac{217}{360}$

Sept 25



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 83.4%

*Target = 75%*

[RED]

High is Good

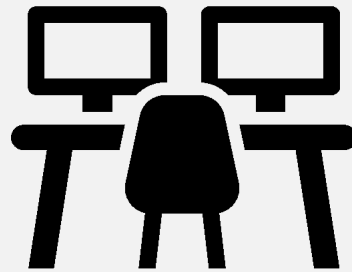


% 16 to 17 year olds who are not in  
education, employment or training (NEET)

**4.63%**

$\frac{325}{7014}$

Sept 25



Previous Term = 4.63%

*Target = 4%*

[Red]

Low is good

% of early years  
childminders inspected  
rated good or outstanding

100%

Quarterly



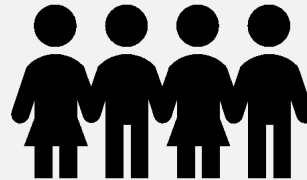
Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 98%

*Target = no target*

% of early years group  
settings inspected rated  
good or outstanding

92%

Quarterly



Previous Quarter:  
Q1: 98%

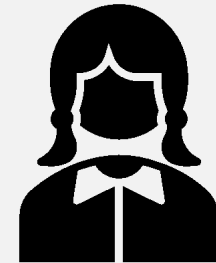
*Target = no target*

Early Years Foundation  
Stage: % reaching a good  
level of development

63.1%

2029  
—  
3216

2024/25



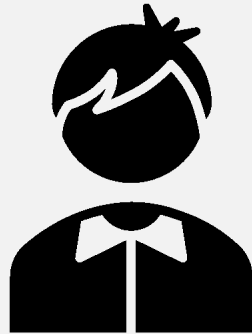
Previous Year:  
2023/24 63.6%

*Target = no target*

## % attendance rate in Oldham primary schools

End Summer  
term 25

**94.6%**



Previous Term:  
Q1: 94.7%

*Target = no target*

[NO TARGET]

High is Good

## % attendance rate in Oldham secondary schools

End Summer  
term 25

**92.3%**



Previous Term:  
Q1: 92.5%

*Target = no target*

[NO TARGET]

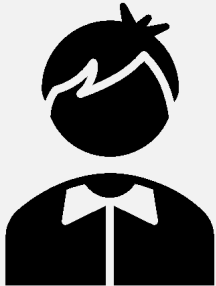
High is Good

## % of SEND fixed term suspensions in primary schools

End Summer  
term 25

**80.6%**

54  
—  
67



Previous Term:  
Q1: 79.5%

*Target = no target*

[NO TARGET]

Low is Good

## % of SEND fixed term suspensions in secondary schools

End Summer  
term 25

**33.7%**

248  
—  
735



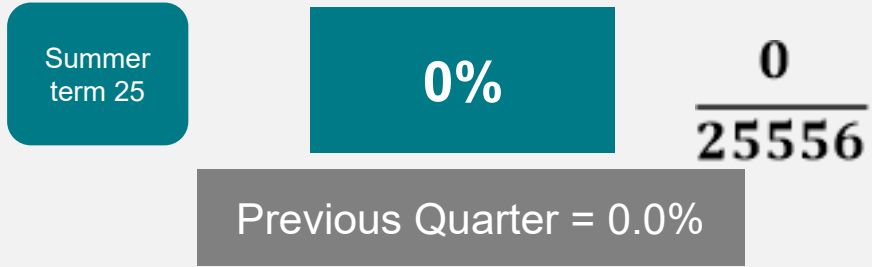
Previous Term:  
Q1: 37.8%

*Target = no target*

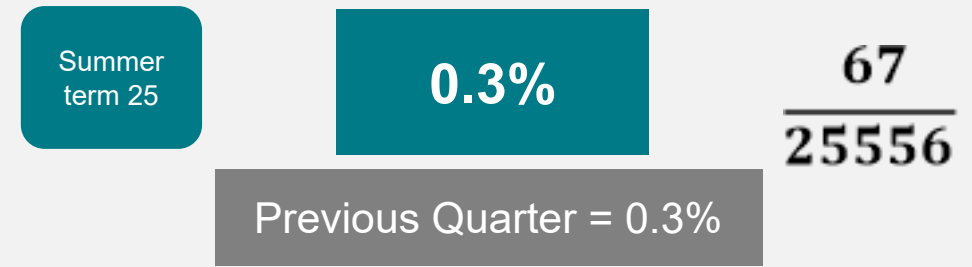
[NO TARGET]

Low is Good

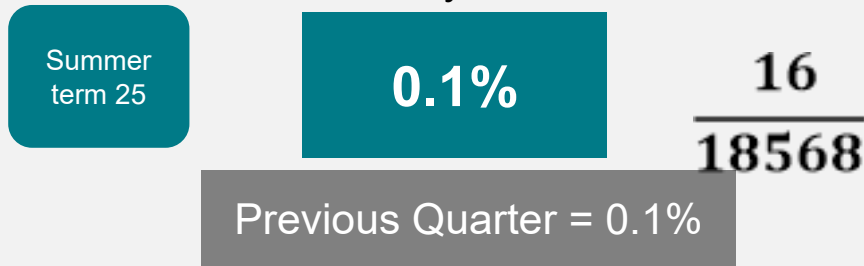
% of permanent exclusions in primary schools



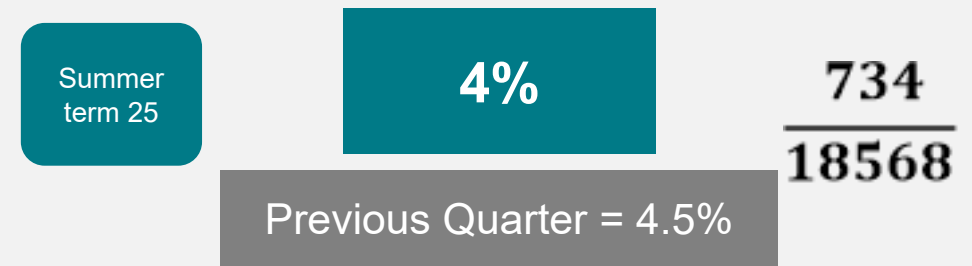
% of fixed term suspensions in primary schools



% of permanent exclusions in secondary schools



% of fixed term suspensions in secondary schools



No Target Set  
Low is good

# Development areas across the directorate

## **% 16 to 17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)**

NEET and unknown are not monitored during quarter 2, due to how the DfE monitors. Below is an extract from the relevant guidelines:

It is extremely important that information on the activity of young people is as up to date as possible so that those who are not participating, or who are NEET, can be identified and supported to re-engage. All young people whose current activity cannot be confirmed must be recorded as 'not known' until their current activity is re-established. The currency requirements mean that it is normal for the proportion of young people whose current activity is not known to rise sharply over the summer, especially where most provision is in Further Education rather than school based. DfE does not monitor 'not knowns' between July and September and services are advised not to benchmark their performance against others during this period.

Consequently, a large proportion of our young people will become 'unknown' whilst we re-establish the destinations for those who are on one year and two-year courses. This large number of unknowns distorts the NEET percentage and makes statistics impossible to produce – hence the DfE advice for services is not to benchmark performance during this period.

## **Annual EHCP (SEND) statutory reviews completed within legal timeframe**

At the end of each academic year, the SEND team request paperwork from schools/pupils with overdue reviews for the academic year, as a result, during July/Aug/Sept timeliness reduces. Decisions are made in the same weekly cycle as the review paperwork is submitted, which is a part of the process that works well, however the dates already exceed the 4 week timescale following the review.

# Reflections from Cabinet Member

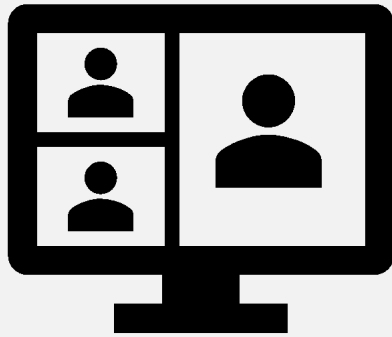
The education and early years data shows a positive trajectory, particularly in the pass rate of lifelong learners and sustained good school attendance. However, we recognise the challenges in EHCP annual review timeliness and NEET tracking during Q2. We remain committed to improving SEND outcomes and ensuring every child and young person has access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.

*Councillor Mohon Ali*

Cabinet member for Education& Skills

Number of overall  
engagements across all  
GOW contracts and/or  
online registrations

**2,433**

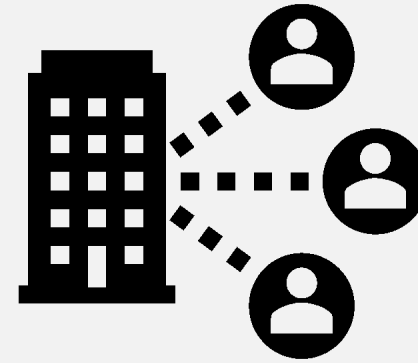


Q1: 2,744

*Target = 2,701*

Number of  
residents into  
employment

**743**



Q1: 939

*Target = 718*



# Development areas across the directorate

## Number of overall engagements across all GOW contracts and/or online registrations

Get Oldham Working (GOW) has supported **743 Oldham residents into employment** as of September 2025, exceeding the annual job outcome target of 718. This reflects the strength of GOW's integrated model — combining one-to-one support, employability skills, and health-related interventions to help residents overcome barriers and sustain work.

However, while overall delivery remains strong, the total number of **resident engagements (2,433)** is slightly below the quarterly target of **2,744**. This variance is primarily linked to the **National Careers Service (NCS)**, which provides lower-intensity support compared with other GOW programmes such as **Restart**, **Support to Succeed**, and **In-Work Progression** — all of which are exceeding their engagement and outcome profiles.

To strengthen performance, GOW is increasing **group-based sessions** and outreach delivery to improve reach and volume, particularly within the NCS contract. The introduction of a **central triage process**, improved **CRM tracking**, and closer alignment with **Live Well** and **Neighbourhood Teams** will further enhance referral flow, efficiency, and early engagement over the coming months. Despite the engagement measure showing red under the current tolerance settings, GOW's performance remains robust and on trajectory to meet both engagement and employment targets by year-end.

# Reflections from Cabinet Member

Get Oldham Working continues to exceed employment targets, demonstrating the strength of our integrated support model. While engagement numbers are slightly below target, the steps being taken to enhance outreach and referral pathways are promising. We remain focused on ensuring residents have the tools and opportunities to thrive in a changing labour market.

*Councillor Fida Hussain*

Cabinet member for Enterprise

# Communities directorate

- Youth Services

# Introduction: Director of Communities

The Youth Service Team over the Summer period have been extremely stretched with demand to support young people in need and manage rising ASB a challenge. Specifically, the Detached Youth and District Youth Teams where we have a basic offer in Districts have been stretched. The work has also been more intense with targeted work. However, the number of young people engaged and supported is a real positive. Both the Outdoor and Environmental Education Service (OEES) and the Youth Service offered a comprehensive Summer programmes which was also supported by a successful Holiday Activity Funding programmes.

*Neil Consterdine, Director of Communities*

# Youth Services key metrics

Page 45

Number of engagements (visits) to OEES provision

**1808**



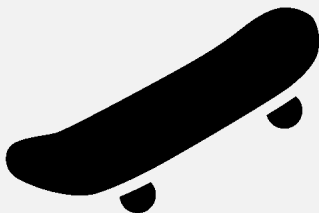
Q1: 3552  
Previous Year:  
24/25: 7729

*Target = 8000 (annually)*

[Green]

Number of youth work sessions delivered

**533**



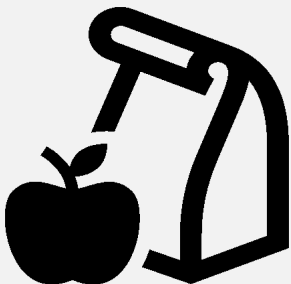
Q1: 568  
Previous Year:  
24/25: 2275

*Target = 3000 (annually)*

[Green]

Number of OEES sessions delivered

**68**



Q1: 108  
New Measure in 25/26

*Target = 500 (annually)*

[Green]

Number of individual young people engaged with youth service (Number)

**543**



Q1: 1403  
Previous Year:  
24/25: 2744

*Target = 3000 (annually)*

[Green]

# Reflections from Cabinet Member

The Youth Service has shown remarkable resilience and impact during a challenging summer period. Despite staffing pressures and increased demand, the team delivered a strong programme of engagement, including targeted interventions and outdoor education sessions. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme continues to be a vital support for vulnerable families, and the number of young people reached is a testament to the dedication of our youth workers.

*Councillor Shaid Mushtaq*

Cabinet member for Children and Young People



**Oldham**  
Council

This page is intentionally left blank



# Annual Report Complex Safeguarding Hub July 2024 – June 2025



# Contents

Foreword	Pg 3
Purpose	Pg 5
Context	Pg 6 - 9
Key Achievements	Pg 10
Prevention	Pg 11 – 12
Protection	Pg 13 – 16
Prosecution	Pg 17 – 19
Missing From Home	Pg 20 – 26
Building Professional and Public Confidence	Pg 27 - 28
Performance	Pg 29 – 30
Key Priorities for 2024-2025	Pg 31 - 32

## Foreword

### Vision for Children, Young People and Families

- 1.1 The Contextual Approach to Complex Safeguarding Strategy 2024 – 2027 outlines the vision held in Oldham:

*“Our vision is that all children, young people, and adults who are vulnerable to exploitation, either criminal or sexual, are provided with a clear targeted response which enables and promotes a targeted multi-agency response to need and risk.*

*We want all our children, young people, and adults to live in a Borough where they feel safe and protected from the risk of exploitation in all of its forms. To achieve this, we will provide an integrated response to Complex Safeguarding concerns, sharing information efficiently and in a timely manner and within agreed protocols to protect and safeguard our children, young people, and vulnerable adults. The aim is that the three key partners will be joined by a variety of multi-agency partners to ensure a targeted response across need and risk for vulnerable people so they can be supported to live free from exploitation.”*

- 1.2 With our vision in mind, we have an agreed set of values and principles within Oldham:

- Treat Children, Young People and Adults at risk with compassion and understanding, be non-judgmental, and treat people with dignity and respect.
- Actively listen to the voice of the child or adult and their lived experiences.
- Foster a culture where professional challenge is acceptable and encouraged.
- Approach each case with an open mind and make objective and ethical decisions.
- Take a holistic approach to support the child or adult, including giving consideration to wider factors.
- Recognise the diversity across the borough and incorporate this into our approach.

- 1.3 The Complex Safeguarding Hub combines the three key partners, Greater Manchester Police, NHS and Children’s Social Care for safeguarding as an integrated service for response, consultation and intervention in relation to exploitation concerns of children and young people.

- 1.3 The Oldham Complex Safeguarding Hub work with any young person up to the age of 18 years (or up to the age of 25 years for any young adult currently open to the After Care Service for Oldham) who are open for assessment, intervention or planning to Children’s Social Care, where there is an identified high risk of, or current experience of exploitation. The teamwork alongside a number of partner agencies and third sector services to ensure appropriate information sharing and timely signposting to key services inclusive of Probation, Housing, TOG MIND, Early break, Catch 22 and KOGS (Keeping Our Girls Safe).

- 1.4 The Complex Safeguarding Hub recognises the vital importance of the work we do with children, young people, and their families across Oldham. We are honoured to support children during some of the most difficult and vulnerable moments in their lives. As a directorate, we are committed to continuously improving our practice—adapting and evolving our approach to ensure that children and families remain at the centre of everything we do, with a strong focus on nurturing relationships and strengthening connections.



Natassja Gollcher

Head of Complex Safeguarding, Duty and Advice and EDT.

## Purpose

- 2.1** The purpose of the Annual Report is to provide an overview of the Complex Safeguarding Hub and the impact of the work undertaken by the Complex Safeguarding Hub.
- 2.2** The report will outline the different strands of the work the Complex Safeguarding Hub undertakes, and the outcomes achieved over the period of July 2024 – June 2025.
- 2.3** The report will also set the priorities for the upcoming 12 months.

## Context

- 3.1** In Oldham we have taken on the agreed Greater Manchester definition of Complex Safeguarding:

*“Complex Safeguarding is criminal activity (often organised), or behaviour associated with criminality, involving children and young adults (often vulnerable) where there is exploitation and/or a clear or implied safeguarding concern.”*

Complex Safeguarding addresses the direct influences on children and young people outside of the family home, specifically where there is risk of sexual and/or criminal exploitation. Oldham aims to ensure we have a solid understanding and response to different forms of exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

- 3.2** The Complex Safeguarding Hub consists of a specialist police team of Detectives and Officers, a children’s social care team, consisting of social workers and a family worker and a specialist exploitation nurse and a psychotherapist. The Challenger Team also works closely with the Complex Safeguarding Hub and continue to respond to Organised Crime.

- 3.3** The current structure in the Complex Safeguarding Hub is:

- 1x Complex Safeguarding Team Manager
- 1x Complex Safeguarding Advanced Practitioner
- 5.5 x Complex Safeguarding Social Workers
- 1 x Operation Sherwood Social Worker
- 1 x APST Social Worker
- 1 x Complex Safeguarding Family Worker
- 1x Missing from Home Co-Ordinator
- 0.5 x Trusted Relationship Psychotherapist
- 1x Specialist Nurse
- 2 x Detective Sergeants
- 6 x Detective Constables/Police Constables
- 1 x Operational Support Officer

- 3.4** The Oldham Complex Safeguarding Hub work with any young person up to the age of 18 years (or up to the age of 25 years for any young adult currently open to the After Care Service for Oldham) who are open for assessment, intervention or planning to Children’s Social Care, where there is an identified high risk of, or current experience of exploitation. The teamwork alongside a number of partner agencies and third sector services to ensure appropriate information sharing and timely signposting to key services inclusive of Probation, Housing, TOG MIND, Early break, Catch 22 and KOGS (Keeping Our Girls Safe).

- 3.5** In addition to Social Workers and Police, the team has the benefit of key professionals who are invaluable in helping to provide the scaffolding of support around young people and their families as well as in bringing the puzzle pieces together.

**3.6** The Specialist Nurse is a vital member of the Complex Safeguarding Hub, bringing extensive knowledge, experience, and clinical expertise to the team. Their role is central to ensuring that the health needs of the young people we support are identified and met effectively. The nurse works closely with GPs, school nurses, and other health services to facilitate access to essential care, including GP appointments, sexual health services, CAMHS, and Early Break. They also deliver direct work with young people on key areas such as relationships, sexual health, emotional wellbeing, and substance use. In addition to direct support, the Specialist Nurse contributes to the team's training offer and acts as a key point of contact for health professionals seeking advice or guidance around exploitation. They also provide advocacy for young people, particularly in relation to emotional wellbeing and mental health, and collaborate with Social Workers to deliver joint sessions where appropriate.

**3.7** The Complex Safeguarding Hub benefits from the expertise of a Clinical Psychotherapist, whose role is to enhance the team's existing knowledge and confidence through trauma-informed case formulation and psychological recovery models. Central to this approach is the young person and their established 'trusted relationship', which serves as the foundation for promoting recovery and emotional healing. This therapeutic support is a key component of the team's ability to engage positively with young people and currently includes:

- **Consultation sessions** (individual or group): These provide space to explore trauma-informed case formulations, understand relational challenges, and develop strategies to support young people with specific issues they may be facing.
- **One-to-one emotional resilience support:** Tailored sessions to help staff manage the emotional demands of their work.
- **Compassion-focused wellbeing and self-support group:** A space to promote self-care and emotional wellbeing among practitioners.
- **Reflective group sessions:** Facilitated opportunities for the team to reflect on practice, share learning, and build collective insight.
- **Workshops and training:** Covering topics such as emotional regulation, crisis support (including self-harm and risk), motivation for mental health engagement, psychological formulation, and resilience-building.
- Here's a refined version of your paragraph with a clear, professional tone that highlights the impact of the support:

This support continues to be highly valued by the team and plays a crucial role in shaping how we work with young people. It enables practitioners to develop a deeper understanding of each young person's psychological needs, enhancing the quality and sensitivity of the interventions offered. The expertise of the Clinical Psychotherapist has proven invaluable—not only in strengthening the skills and confidence of staff, but also in improving engagement and outcomes for the young people we support. Additionally, the training and reflective opportunities provided have significantly bolstered the team's emotional resilience, which is essential when

working in a field that regularly involves exposure to intense emotions and real-life trauma.

- 3.8** Family Support Worker: The Complex Safeguarding Hub currently benefits from the support of a dedicated Family Support Worker, who works alongside Social Workers to provide tailored support to parents and carers. This role is instrumental in strengthening family relationships and improving outcomes for young people.

The support offered includes, but is not limited to:

- Advocacy on behalf of parents
- Education around key topics such as exploitation, grooming, online safety, and adolescent development
- Mediation and crisis intervention
- Safety planning and emotional support
- Helping parents understand processes and procedures.
- Exploring and supporting parents' aspirations for their children

This work plays a vital role in empowering parents, enhancing their understanding, and enabling them to better support their children through complex and often challenging circumstances.

- 3.9 Wider Partnerships** – The Complex Safeguarding Hub's partnership working extends well beyond its core agencies, drawing on a broad network of professionals to enhance support for young people. Key partners include Community Safety, Youth Services, Trading Standards, Sexual Health, the Partnership Enforcement Team, Youth Justice, Early Break, Education, CAMHS, KOGs, and Catch 22. These partners are regularly invited to the monthly MACE (Missing and Child Exploitation) meetings, which are consistently well attended. MACE provides a valuable forum for sharing emerging issues, concerns, themes, and trends, and for fostering collaborative responses to complex safeguarding challenges.

- 3.10 Transitional Safeguarding** – **Transitional Safeguarding** *is a term that has been used by Research in Practice to highlight the need to improve the safeguarding response to older teenagers and young adults in a way that recognises their developmental needs. (Firmin et al 2019).* Transitional safeguarding is recognising that vulnerability does not end when a young person reaches 18. The Complex Safeguarding hub offers support to young people up to the age of 25, this is consent led once an individual turns 18 however there are currently a number of post 18 young people open to the team. The hub recognises the need to continue to offer this support to those who are being exploited or have been the victim of exploitation over the age of 18. Transitional Safeguarding is an ongoing priority for Adult and Children Services with a project currently being implemented to embed this in practice.



**3.11 Daily Governance** - The Complex Safeguarding Hub holds a daily governance meeting each morning, attended by key partner agencies. This forum provides a structured space to share and review intelligence, referrals, missing from home episodes, arrests, and crimes linked to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), and Modern Slavery.

Through collaborative discussion, actions are agreed, recorded, and reviewed, ensuring a coordinated response across Oldham's safeguarding partners—including CSE, CCE, and Challenger colleagues—under a unified approach. The meeting also considers new referrals to the Complex Safeguarding Hub and any significant incidents involving young people already known to the service.

Team members contribute valuable intelligence on associations, offenders, and locations or properties of concern, helping to shape an informed and timely response. Agreed actions may include:

- Referrals to MASH for early intervention or social work assessment
- Requests for strategy meetings
- Referrals for CSE/CCE assessments
- Initiation of police investigations
- Proactive community responses, such as joint visits with Housing or Trading Standards (Partnership Enforcement Team) to properties or businesses of concern.

**3.12 The Missing and Child Exploitation meeting (MACE) meetings** - are a process whereby partner agencies are able to share information where there are concerns that a child or young person (CYP) is at risk of, is being exploited, or is frequently missing from home or care. Missing episodes are a clear indicator of exploitation risk and a potential indicator of significant harm. The purpose of the MACE meetings is to target multi-agency resource by sharing information on identified children by agreeing/reviewing case actions and sharing local intelligence. The aim is to improve the identification and tracking of actions regarding children which agencies are concerned about and to reduce missing episodes of children and young people.

## Key Achievements

- The Complex Safeguarding Hub continue to provide training and advice in respect of Child Exploitation to schools and colleges across the borough.
- The GM Peer review completed in July and August 2025 highlighted many strengths in relation to the Complex safeguarding Hub, including the strong ethos the team hold to support children to be safe, resilient and to thrive.
- There have been 38 arrests in relation to Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Investigations, with the investigations into these crimes ongoing.
- As part of disruption in relation to Exploitation the Complex Safeguarding Police team have issued 25 Child Abduction Warnings.

Below is also some of the feedback that the team have received:

I just wanted to pass on some positive feedback for one of your workers. She was recently allocated MC who resided at my home until she moved out today. I wanted to comment on Leanne professional approach but also was able to build a relationship with MC in the short time she has known her. Were MC felt comfortable to disclose things to her. We were both on the same page regarding concerns and supported me when we raised these in strategy meetings Leanne has been a great support to the home, if I have struggled to get hold of social worker Leanne has supported me where possible. She has at times gone above and beyond her job role. I feel it has been a positive working relationship and I have felt supported. If you could pass of these positive comments and thank her for her hard work 😊

Residential provider.

Amazing! The children absolutely loved it. We covered 30 children but there are a few more who definitely need it too!

Littlemoor Primary School

She's the best, I can tell her things I can't tell my parents and I know she won't tell me off. She talks through things with me and is always there when I need her. – *Young Person*

Happy working with Stacey, grateful for the CST team, and will you pass on my gratitude to the HOS. Involvement has opened my eyes to the work CST do. Work with CST has upgraded our knowledge and skills. It's intense work and everyone wants to keep Child safe.

Residential provider.

Things seem more settled, and he does not sneak out anymore. My experience of working with the team has been very good. He has done his best, and I am happy with CST Social Worker. CST Social Worker has helped my son to engage and become more open. At the start when CST Social Worker took him out [for direct work/ intervention] he would come home and be very quiet. However, over time he would be more open – and his mood, emotions and confidence have changed for the better.

Parent

No, it's all good, my worker has helped me understand what was happening and has helped me see what I want in my future.

*Young Person*

## Prevention

- 4.1** The Complex Safeguarding Team is resourced to a level where it can provide a prevention offer to children and young people within the borough. It is noted that prevention is key, with the team wanting to prevent exploitation wherever possible. We recognise that this is better than responding to and protecting children after the harm has taken place.
- 4.2** As part of the prevention offer there is a wider campaign of increasing awareness, education and training of young people, families, communities, and professionals in a variety of ways but also through our direct one to one case work. Alongside this the complex safeguarding team utilise the prevention support offered via KOGs (Keeping Our Girls Safe), Catch 22 and Youth Justice.
- 4.3** The work of the Complex Safeguarding Hub and its partners in tackling child exploitation is promoted across various social media platforms, including Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). These communications have highlighted key initiatives such as weeks of action, provided insight into the role of the Complex Safeguarding Hub, and showcased examples of proactive multi-agency activity, including the execution of police warrants. In addition, the Hub proudly shares updates on successful prosecutions and convictions related to child exploitation, reinforcing the message that perpetrators will be held accountable and that safeguarding remains a borough-wide priority.
- 4.4** The Complex Safeguarding Hub also continue to provide training and advice in respect of Child Exploitation to schools and colleges across the borough. In October 2024 and March 2025 there were two weeks of action, within these weeks the Complex Safeguarding Hub delivered focussed sessions to students in high schools and primary schools across Oldham, alongside delivering focussed sessions to residential providers. These sessions focused on sexual exploitation, online safety, carrying weapons, peer-on-peer abuse and youth violence. These sessions were well received by students, with them actively participating in the sessions.

### In Summary:

- Since July 2024 Training inputs have been delivered to some schools within Oldham with over 3000 students and teachers across high schools and primary settings.
- Training inputs were delivered to some of the Care Homes within the Oldham Area.

This training has been well received with the team often being invited back, this training has also enabled the team to develop positive relationships with education settings within the borough.

- 4.5** In July 2025 the complex Safeguarding hub invested in 10 virtual reality headsets, to use as part of the prevention offer, for a period of 12 months. Virtual Decisions: KNIVES explores the reasons why young people carry knives and the consequences of that and Virtual Decisions: GANGS helps participants to recognise the signs, and understand the dangers, of child criminal exploitation, youth violence and coercion. These headsets have been successfully used in other local authorities, and locally within the Trafford area and Bolton have also recently commissioned this service.
- 4.6** The training for these headsets has been rolled out across the partnership, inclusive of GMP, Positive Steps, Youth Service, Kingsland, After Care and Complex Safeguarding. Since July 2025 these headsets have been utilised by 90 young people, alongside planned sessions to deliver this in a number of primary schools in the borough.
- 4.7** The Complex Safeguarding Team have also joined up with the Prevention Hub to enable us to co-deliver sessions within schools across the borough in the upcoming academic year. The sessions that will be co-delivered focusing on complex and contextual safeguarding. The Prevention Hub is a police team who are responsible for overseeing the district-based demand reduction and problem solving, the team is made up of school-based police officers, neighbourhood police officers and the missing from home officer. They are co-located within Duty and Advice to enable partnership working.
- 4.8** The Complex Safeguarding Hub have also been involved in the delivery of the wider exploitation training in partnership with the Oldham Safeguarding Children partnership, this training is available for all partners. Within this year the training has been developed to be an “All Age Exploitation” training, delivered jointly with the Oldham Safeguarding Adults Partnership. This training has been well received by those who have attended and is a regular feature on both partnerships training calendars.
- 4.9** The Complex Safeguarding Hub continue to attend the Quarterly Provider meeting, which has enabled the Hub to develop links and relationships with Care Providers within the Oldham area. It also enables the Complex Safeguarding hub to disseminate any local trends or areas of concern to the local providers. The attendance at these meetings has been received well by the care providers.

## Protection

- 5.1** Since July 2024, the Complex Safeguarding Hub has received 132 referrals, with 67% accepted into the service for direct support. Referrals that did not meet the threshold for the Hub were appropriately signposted to alternative services such as Keeping Our Girls Safe (KOGs), Catch 22, Prevention & Diversion, or other relevant agencies. In some cases, advice and guidance were provided to the allocated teams to ensure the young person's needs were still addressed.
- 5.2** Catch 22 continues to provide targeted support around Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and County Lines activity within Oldham. Since June 2024, they have worked with 44 young people across the borough. The partnership between Catch 22 and the Complex Safeguarding Hub remains strong, with close collaboration on emerging concerns and coordinated responses to risk.
- 5.3** Keeping our Girls Safe have continued to offer support and interventions in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation across the Oldham Borough. Their work complements that of the Complex Safeguarding Hub, and the partnership continues to be effective and well-integrated. Since June 2024, KOGs has supported 152 individuals, including both children and adults.
- 5.4** Support for children and young people affected by exploitation is grounded in trauma-informed, relational, and strength-based approaches. At the heart of this work is the commitment to building trusted relationships that foster safety, trust, and meaningful engagement.

The Complex Safeguarding team delivers tailored, direct work that includes:

- Education through conversation-based learning, role play, and scenario-based safety planning
- Emotional support and advocacy
- Active safeguarding and disruption
- Support with achieving best evidence.
- Goal setting and working towards young people's aspirations.
- Creative and flexible approaches that respond to individual needs.

A key pillar of this approach is the **trusted relationship model**, which underpins all relational practice. This model is central to the work of the team and is embedded across all partner agencies. By being consistent, responsive, and trustworthy, practitioners create a safe space where young people feel able to share their lived experiences, disclose concerns if they choose to, and engage meaningfully with support.

The team remains focused on what matters most to young people—supporting them with the issues they identify as important and ensuring their voices are heard throughout their journey.

- 5.5** Preventing exploitation involves addressing both the factors that increase vulnerability and those that build resilience and strengthen safeguarding. The Complex Safeguarding Hub adopts a proactive, relational approach that places trusted relationships and trauma-informed, strength-based practice at the centre of all interventions.

Prevention work includes:

- Direct education sessions with young people.
- Practical safety planning using role play and real-life scenarios.
- Conversation-based learning and reflective practice.
- Emotional support and advocacy.
- Active safeguarding and disruption.
- Supporting young people to achieve their goals and aspirations.
- Flexibility and creativity to tailor approaches to individual needs.

Designated professionals across all partner agencies work collaboratively to ensure that relationships underpin every aspect of practice. This consistent, relationship-led approach helps young people feel safe, supported, and empowered to engage meaningfully with services.

- 5.6** A core focus of the Complex Safeguarding Hub is working directly with young people who are vulnerable to, or have experienced, exploitation. The support provided is highly personalised, recognising that each young person is unique and requires a tailored approach. When planning interventions, careful consideration is given to the young person's age, culture, identity, learning needs, background, and the nature and level of concern. This ensures that the support is not only relevant but also respectful and responsive to their individual circumstances. By centring the young person's voice and needs, the team is able to deliver meaningful, trauma-informed support that promotes safety, empowerment, and long-term positive outcomes.
- 5.7** Currently, 55% of the young people supported by the Complex Safeguarding Hub are assessed as being vulnerable to exploitation. A further 27% are suspected to have experienced exploitation, while 18% have been confirmed as victims. Over the past 12 months, the majority of young people engaged with the service have fallen into the categories of either being vulnerable to or suspected of experiencing exploitation. This reflects the team's proactive focus on early intervention—working with young people before harm occurs. The recent increase in staffing within the Hub has further strengthened the team's capacity to engage earlier and more effectively with those at risk.

- 5.8** When a young person is assessed as no longer requiring support from the Complex Safeguarding Hub, ensuring continuity of care is a key priority. The team works to secure ongoing support from appropriate services such as Keeping Our Girls Safe (KOGs), Catch 22, Early Break, the Youth Justice Service, or the Youth Service. A handover process is completed with the young person to ensure a smooth transition and to maintain the consistency of support. This approach helps to sustain progress, reduce disruption, and ensure that the young person continues to feel supported and connected to services that meet their needs.
- 5.9** Disrupting Exploitation Without Criminalising Victims - A persistent challenge in tackling Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is the limited availability of tools to disrupt perpetrators without criminalising the young people involved. Intelligence gathering remains a vital safeguarding tool, but it is often hindered by young people's reluctance to share information—commonly due to fear for their safety or being labelled as “grasses.”
- 5.10** To address this, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and the Complex Safeguarding Hub have adapted their approach, placing greater emphasis on trusted relationships, trauma-informed practice, and non-criminalising responses. This aligns with the Home Office's Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit, which promotes multi-agency collaboration and the use of civil disruption measures—such as Child Abduction Warning Notices, Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders, and Sexual Risk Orders—to safeguard children and disrupt offenders without prosecuting victims.
- 5.11** Legislative Framework - The Modern Slavery Act 2015 provides a legal foundation for recognising children coerced into criminal activity as victims of modern slavery. Under Section 45, children who commit offences as a direct result of exploitation may be entitled to a statutory defence, reinforcing the principle that they should be protected, not punished.
- 5.12** Further strengthening this approach, the Crime and Policing Bill 2025 introduces a standalone offence for adults who exploit children for criminal purposes. It also proposes Child Criminal Exploitation Prevention Orders, which can be applied even in the absence of a criminal conviction, to restrict exploiters' access to children. These developments reflect a growing national and local commitment to treating exploited children as victims and prioritising their safeguarding.
- 5.13** Advocacy for Young People Exploited Through County Lines - Given the significant risks to young people who disclose experiences of CCE, GMP has focused on identifying alternative disruption strategies that do not rely on victim testimony. The Complex Safeguarding Hub continues to advocate for young people who may be committing offences under threat, coercion, or control, particularly in the context of county lines exploitation.
- 5.14** This includes building partnerships with police forces outside Oldham, where young people are often arrested for drug-related offences. The team has identified a clear



need for advocacy and safeguarding support for these young people, ensuring their exploitation is recognised and that they are treated as victims, not offenders.

- 5.15** Intelligence Sharing and Mapping - The team actively contributes to the mapping of local Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) and young people at risk, drawing on the local knowledge of PCSOs, neighbourhood policing teams, and other professionals such as Youth Justice, schools, and family networks. This intelligence is shared appropriately to inform both safeguarding responses and disruption activity.
- 5.16** This approach enables the team to focus on protecting young people while also supporting law enforcement in securing charges and convictions against perpetrators. These practices are equally applied in cases of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), allowing the team to monitor known offenders, identify emerging concerns, and take preventative action where necessary.
- 5.17** Multi-Agency Disruption Through the Challenger Meeting - The Complex Safeguarding Hub plays an active role in the Serious and Organised Crime Challenger Meeting, held monthly by GMP. This multi-agency forum brings together partners to discuss OCGs, identify disruption opportunities, and coordinate preventative action. The meeting has also proven effective in the early identification of young people at risk of exploitation, enabling timely intervention.
- 5.18** Partnership with the Challenger Team -The Hub maintains a strong working relationship with the Challenger Team, which is essential for recognising and responding to both CCE and OCG-related exploitation. This partnership facilitates the timely sharing of intelligence, joint problem-solving, and enhanced safeguarding of victims. It also strengthens efforts to disrupt and prosecute offenders, ensuring a coordinated and effective response to serious and organised exploitation.
- 5.19** The multi-agency composition of the Complex Safeguarding Hub enables a comprehensive and coordinated response from the outset of a young person's involvement. This integrated approach ensures that support is multi-faceted and tailored to the individual's needs. To minimise the trauma of repeated disclosures, joint visits are routinely undertaken by Police and Complex Safeguarding Social Workers. This reduces the number of times a young person must recount their experiences, promoting a more trauma-informed and child-centred process. Effective information sharing is central to the team's model, ensuring that all relevant factors are considered when planning support. This enables the delivery of a personalised service that reflects the young person's unique circumstances. At the heart of this approach is relational practice, which remains a core principle across all partner agencies. By prioritising consistency, trust, and meaningful engagement, the team fosters strong relationships that support both safeguarding and recovery.



## Prosecution

- 6.1** The success of the Complex Safeguarding Police Team continues to be demonstrated through the quality of their investigations, the effective use of technology to gather evidence, and the robust sharing of intelligence within the multi-agency team. Their determination, combined with strong partnership working, has led to several cases progressing to trial.
- 6.2** The Police team is currently managing over 132 open investigations. To date, there have been 38 arrests linked to these investigations, which remain ongoing. As part of their disruption strategy, the police team has issued 28 Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs) to adults suspected of involvement in exploitation.
- 6.3** There are currently nine active police operations led by the Complex Safeguarding Police Team. Five relate to Child Sexual Exploitation, including both recent and non-recent cases, familial abuse, and offences involving indecent images. Four are focused on Child Criminal Exploitation.
- 6.4** Multi-agency collaboration is essential in identifying offenders, gathering evidence (including statements from young people and their families), and progressing cases toward prosecution. Each professional within the team plays a vital role. The police team works closely with social workers, health professionals, licensing, and community safety partners to carry out targeted disruption in areas of concern.
- 6.5** In partnership with the Challenger Team, the police continue to take a proactive approach to tackling the criminal exploitation of children. While safeguarding remains a priority, investigations into Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) are continuously reviewed to assess and respond to levels of threat, risk, and harm.
- 6.6** Operation Sherwood – Supporting Survivors of Non-Recent CSE - The Complex Safeguarding Team continues to support Operation Sherwood, an investigation dedicated to survivors of non-recent child sexual exploitation in Oldham. Currently, 10 survivors are actively engaged with the team. The dedicated operation Sherwood social worker works to build trusted relationships, enabling survivors to share their experiences and identify perpetrators.
- 6.7** Tailored Support for Survivors - Support is carefully tailored to each survivor's needs and circumstances. The dedicated social worker, based at Nexus House two days per week, plays a key role in identifying support needs, developing care plans, and coordinating referrals to services such as mental health, housing, or adult social care. They also assist with visits, phone calls, and the preparation of approach documents prior to contact.

- 6.8** Operation Sherwood also involves engaging with individuals who may have witnessed exploitation. Many of these witnesses were childhood peers of survivors and may themselves have been victims. All approaches are trauma-informed and tailored to individual needs. Where disclosures are made, these are fully supported and investigated with the same rigor as survivor accounts.
- 6.9** Perpetrator Identification and Arrests - The perpetrator strand of Operation Sherwood is focused on identifying and arresting individuals named by survivors. To date, 23 arrests have been made. Two individuals have been arrested on separate occasions, and one case has resulted in no further action.
- 6.10** Safeguarding During Arrests - All arrests are carefully planned to minimise distress, particularly where children may be present in the home. The dedicated social worker is present on strike days to provide immediate safeguarding support if required.
- 6.11** Safeguarding Children Linked to Suspects - Where suspects have children or regular contact with children, referrals are made, and strategy meetings are coordinated by the dedicated social worker. They also provide guidance to children's social workers where Section 47 (child protection) or Section 17 (child in need) assessments may be necessary. The team ensures that bail conditions are proportionate and prioritise the safety of any children involved. The dedicated social worker supports this process by conducting bail address checks to confirm that suspects are not being bailed to households with children. The team remains committed to securing justice for all survivors of non-recent child sexual exploitation in Oldham.
- 6.12** The below examples demonstrate the team's ability to work together to respond immediately to safeguard children, disrupt exploitation, and ensure active support to meet a child / young person's overall needs. Whilst each agency fulfils their specific functions; the team uses a flexible working approach, using the skills and knowledge of each individual worker to provide a co-ordinated timely response in the best interests of each young person.



## Case Examples

A 15-year-old female had been in communication with an adult male who befriended her and her family, he had visited her address and invited her to his address asking for help in tidying up after a family bereavement. Over the course of a year, he increased the amount and frequency of his text messages he has used the girlfriend/boyfriend model of exploitation. The grooming moved from online to contact offences. After this was reported to the police he was arrested and his mobile phone was reviewed, the female child handed her mobile to police for a download. This child subsequently opened to Complex Safeguarding upon the team becoming aware of the report to the police. Upon the mobile phone being investigated, hundreds of messages were found on the devices of a sexual nature. The adult male was charged with inciting a child to engage in sexual activity, 2x sexual communication with a child, 2x sexual activity with a child, 2x engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child, 2x causing a child to engage in sexual activity, 2x breach of sexual risk order. The male pleaded guilty at court and received 8 years imprisonment comprising of 4 years imp & 4 years extended licence. Registration under Sex Offender Act 2003 for an indefinite period, Sexual Harm Prevention Order for an indefinite period and a restraining order for 10 years. The young person and their family were supported through the investigation by their allocated complex social worker and the complex police officer who led the investigation.

**Operation Armada** is a complex investigation of non-recent Child Sexual Exploitation offences which occurred between 2000 – 2008. The perpetrator was a shop keeper in Oldham who would entice young boys and girls into his store by offering alcohol and cigarettes. The shop keeper would hold parties at the premises and there are reports that he would get young persons to wear Asian clothing and to dance for him and other adult males. Following a protracted investigation the perpetrator was charged in February 2025 with 15 non-recent sexual offences against three victims. He has since appeared at Manchester Magistrate's Court and Minshull Street Crown Court, where he was given court bail ahead of his trial on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Oldham Complex Safeguarding was authorised by the Crown Prosecution Service to serve charges of 2 x Rape, 8 x sexual assaults, 5 x indecency.

Since the case appearing in the press a further victim has come forward in June 2025 to report sexual abuse by the perpetrator and this investigation remains ongoing with a view of submitting this further case to the CPS as a matter of priority.

**Op Maidstone** – During a joint visit, by CSH police and CSH Social Worker, to a 17-year-old male open to the team, disclosures were made in relation to this young person being sent to Wales by exploiters to deal drugs, whilst the child in this case could not provide names for the exploiters, he could provide nicknames for them. With several follow up visits to the child and an investigation into the exploitation, over the next two months in total 5 suspects were identified and a further two children were identified as having been exploited by this group.

The further two children were identified and linked through missing from home enquires. In doing so and attributing the phone number that had been in contact with them during missing episodes it was possible to trace the exploiters to having links to the children and in some case place them in vehicles during the trips to other towns alongside the travel time with the children in the same vehicles. The information being gathered as part of the investigation was shared with Wales Police leading to disruption action taking place and a high-risk missing child being located with support from north Wales County lines police team.

With the children been exploited and transported to both Middlesbrough and North Wales to deal Class A drugs, the suspects in the case were previously unknown we were able to identify those involved as well as carry out successful disruptions. This led to the arrest of 5 suspects in early January 2025, while the case is currently ongoing one of the suspects has subsequently been convicted for further drugs offences and has received a custodial prison sentence and another has been convicted for firearms related offences.

The identification of these suspects was crucial in the further offences being discovered and directly assisted in the arrest and conviction of one of the suspects for further drugs offences as once identified and the intel picture built this was directly shared to police on the ground in the areas of exploitation leading to a stop search whereby the suspect was caught in possession of class A drugs with intent to supply.

All 5 suspects were arrested for being concerned in the supply of class A drugs and human trafficking offences. The children involved were safeguarded from further harm and a previously unknown county line was seized and shut down.

## Missing From Home

- 7.1** Missing from Home (MFH) and Associated Risks, it is well-evidenced that children and young people who go missing from home are at significantly increased risk of harm, including potential exposure to or vulnerability to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). Given that missing episodes can serve as critical indicators of exploitation or other safeguarding concerns, it is essential that every MFH incident is thoroughly reported, recorded, and explored. This ensures that appropriate safeguarding responses are implemented, and that the child or young person receives the support they need.
- 7.2** Between 1st April 2024 and 30th March 2025, a total of 1,209 Missing from Home episodes involving children and young people in Oldham were reported to Greater Manchester Police (GMP).
- 7.3** The effectiveness of our response to missing children and young people has previously been highlighted within the Ofsted Inspection in May 2024:
- “Children who go missing or are at risk of exploitation are recognised and responded to well. For these children, the multidisciplinary child exploitation team is a valuable resource. Creative and persistent work is undertaken by committed staff to engage highly vulnerable children. The missing coordinator completes trigger plans which have been successfully used to locate children missing from home or care.”*
- 7.4** The Missing from Home Co-Ordinator became embedded within the Complex Safeguarding Hub and Duty and Advice in August 2023. The Missing from Home Co-Ordinator works closely with the Greater Manchester Police Missing From Police Officer, who is co-located within the MASH area.
- 7.5** It is recognised that children and young people who are missing from home or care are at increased risk of harm, including child exploitation. In recognition of this, Greater Manchester Police implemented the Prevention Hub within the Oldham district. This resource has been invaluable in targeting repeat missing episodes. Within this team also sits the missing from home police officers who are focused on responding to children who are missing, and problem solving to reduce them going missing. Since August 2023 the Missing from Home Co-Ordinator has been in post, working alongside the prevention hub in relation to children and young people who are missing from home or care. This post has enabled a greater oversight of the missing children and young people within the Oldham Area.

### Missing Episodes

- 7.6** Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, a total of 1,029 Missing from Home (MFH) episodes involving children and young people were reported to Greater Manchester Police (GMP) in Oldham. The data reveals important trends in both the volume and nature of missing episodes, as well as the profiles of the children most frequently affected.

- 7.7** Quarter 3 (Oct–Jan) recorded the highest number of MFH episodes (326), followed by Quarter 4 (Jan–Mar) with 266 episodes. The number of episodes involving Children Looked After (CLA) peaked in Quarter 3, accounting for 185 episodes, highlighting the continued vulnerability of this group.
- 7.8** Across all quarters, CLA consistently represented the majority of the top five most frequently missing children. In Quarters 1–3, this figure was 100%, with a slight drop to 80% in Quarter 4. When analysing the top five children missing for the longest periods, the data shows a more varied profile: CLA accounted for the majority in Quarters 2 and 3, while CIN/EH made up 60% of the longest missing cases in Quarter 4.
- 7.9** The data reinforces the importance of robust safeguarding responses for all children who go missing, particularly those in care. While CLA are more likely to be reported missing due to statutory requirements, the increasing proportion of CIN/EH children missing for extended periods suggests a need for enhanced early intervention and preventative work.
- 7.10** The consistent use of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) and the involvement of Positive Steps as an independent provider remain critical in understanding the reasons behind missing episodes and identifying potential risks, including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).
- 7.11** Data consistently shows that children and young people who go missing from home are among the most vulnerable in our community. Many have experienced significant adversity, including removal from parental care, disrupted education, and other adverse childhood experiences. These factors often contribute to the **push and pull dynamics** that lead to missing episodes.
- 7.12** To fully understand the context and risks associated with each MFH episode, every child or young person is offered a **Return Home Interview (RHI)** by an independent provider. These interviews explore where the young person has been, who they were with, and the reasons for going missing. In Oldham, **Positive Steps** delivers this service for children and young people living in the borough, as well as for those looked after within a 20-mile radius.
- 7.13** RHIs are a vital opportunity to identify safeguarding concerns and exploitation risks. The information gathered is shared with Children’s Social Care (CSC) and relevant partner agencies to inform ongoing support and intervention planning.
- 7.14** A significant proportion of MFH reports involve Children Looked After (CLA). While this is a concern, it is important to note that carers are required to report CLA missing in accordance with statutory procedures. In contrast, parents and carers in the community may not always report missing episodes, which may contribute to the disparity in data.

- 7.15** Regardless of a child's care status, every missing episode presents a range of safeguarding risks, depending on the child's age and stage of development. All children who go missing must be considered vulnerable, and appropriate risk assessments must be undertaken.
- 7.16** Children who go missing are at heightened risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). When a child is missing, they are outside the protective oversight of parents or carers, increasing their exposure to harm. It is therefore essential that the team around the child responds swiftly with appropriate support, intervention, and safeguarding measures.
- 7.17** 12% of children who are reported missing from home are open to the Complex Safeguarding team and equate for 26% of all missing from home reports in Oldham. Being reported as missing from home is a known indicator of exploitation and children assessed as at risk of exploitation are closely monitored which could explain the increase in this area. Positive Steps work closely with complex safeguarding workers and attend meetings in relation to children who are reported as missing from home, including daily governance, MACE, and strategy meetings to share and gather information to develop multiagency plans as to how to keep children safe and give them alternative options.

## Return Home Interviews

- 7.18** Below is a breakdown per quarter of return home interviews:

*NB: The annual total for individuals is not a cumulative figure as the same children may be counted in multiple quarters.*

	Q1 24/25		Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Total 2024/25	
MFH Interviews Offered	367		327		281		253		1222	
MFH Interviews Offered (Individuals) Included from Q4 2023/24	255		216		197		167		394	
Initial Contact within 72 hours	364	99%	316	97%	274	98%	253	100%	1235	97%
MFH Interviews Accepted	284	77%	218	67%	203	72%	190	75%	929	73%
Number of Interviews conducted within 72 hours where interview accepted	237	83%	191	88%	156	77%	167	88%	776	84%

From analysing the data for return home interviews, the below has been identified:

- 7.19** Interviews Offered- The number of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) offered—both in terms of individual children and episodes—has steadily declined across the reporting quarters. One potential contributing factor is the implementation of the Right Care, Right Person model at the end of Quarter 2. Further analysis may be required to determine whether this change has also influenced the number of missing episodes.
- 7.20** Interviews Accepted- Acceptance of RHIs was highest in Quarter 1, which also coincided with an increase in the number of children reported missing. While there was a slight dip in Quarter 2, the following two quarters saw a renewed increase in uptake, resulting in an overall acceptance rate of 73%.



- 7.21** It is recognised that children who are more difficult to engage are often those most frequently reported missing. Improving engagement with these young people remains a key priority for the service and is a focus of ongoing quality assurance, participation work, and staff training. To support this, a “leave behind” leaflet has been developed to help young people better understand the support available—this will be explored further in the next section.
- 7.22** Initial Contact- Initial contact within 72 hours of a child’s return has remained consistently high throughout the year, with a 97% success rate. A dedicated worker is available Monday to Saturday to ensure timely follow-up. The small percentage of missed contacts is primarily due to incorrect or missing contact details. In such cases, the team conducts cold calls to the home address and leaves a note requesting a return call.
- 7.23** Interviews Conducted Within 72 Hours- The proportion of RHIs completed within 72 hours has also remained strong, averaging 84% across the year. A dip in Quarter 3 was investigated and attributed to one child who was reported missing on 17 occasions during the quarter—often for extended periods and returning only briefly before going missing again. This made it difficult to complete interviews within the timeframe. Following the child’s request, a placement move was arranged, which led to a reduction in missing episodes.
- 7.24** RHIs are a vital safeguarding tool, offering children and young people a safe space to:
- Share their thoughts and feelings.
  - Explain the reasons for going missing.
  - Identify risks and explore how these can be reduced.
  - Discuss the push and pull factors influencing their behaviour.

However, there are recognised exceptions where an RHI may not be appropriate or possible. These include:

- When a child or young person has been arrested and an interview at that time is not suitable
- When the child is injured, hospitalised, or experiencing acute mental health difficulties.
- When the child is involved in an active police investigation, where an interview could compromise the process.
- When the child is placed more than 20 miles outside of Oldham—Positive Steps, the independent provider, does not conduct RHIs in these cases, and responsibility falls to the allocated social worker or another trusted adult.

## **Quality and Impact of Return Home Interviews**

- 7.25** Positive Steps and the Complex Safeguarding Hub remain committed to delivering a high-quality, child-centred service that meets the needs of children, young people, and their parents/carers. The service is responsive to feedback and continuously seeks to improve practice through regular review and adaptation.
- 7.26** To support this, quarterly audits of Missing from Home Return Interviews (MFHRIs) are conducted, alongside monthly quality assurance meetings undertaken with complex safeguarding. There are also feedback surveys with children, carers, and social workers. These insights have informed the development of bespoke training for practitioners and the co-production of a “leave behind” leaflet to help explain the service to young people.
- 7.27** While the high completion rate of RHIs is encouraging, analysis has highlighted concerns regarding the quality and effectiveness of some RHIs. In many cases:
- The push and pull factors behind the missing episode are not always clearly identified.
  - Young people are not consistently encouraged to reflect on what could prevent future episodes.
  - Emerging themes and patterns are not explored in depth.
  - There is a lack of professional curiosity, which may result in missed safeguarding opportunities or critical information.
  - Capturing the voice of the child and their parents/carers
  - Including observations and analysis of patterns or concerns
  - At times there was limited evidence that Social Workers were utilising the RHI's within case planning or strategy meetings.

Additionally, the timing and setting of RHIs can significantly impact their effectiveness. For example, expecting a child to participate in a formal interview at 9am after returning home in the early hours is unlikely to yield meaningful engagement. In such cases, the process risks becoming a tick-box exercise rather than a valuable intervention.

In response to some of the areas above bespoke training has been delivered to support staff in:

- Understanding the importance of clear, reflective case recording
- Capturing the voice of the child and their parents/carers
- Including observations and analysis of patterns or concerns

This training has led to improvements in the quality of write-ups, with audits highlighting examples of strong relational practice and analytical reflection. RHIs now more frequently demonstrate continuity of care and trusted relationships.

- 7.28** Evidencing Advice and Support - Team discussions revealed that while advice and support were being offered to children and families, the existing RHI form did not allow this to be clearly recorded. The team consulted on necessary changes, which were



submitted to MOSAIC. In the interim, a shared approach was agreed to ensure this support is documented. Later audits identified this as a strength. *Example:* A practitioner supported a young person in accessing a KOGs appointment and completed an AGLEE action plan (informed by Mental Health First Aid training) following concerns around self-harm. This was followed up with the social worker and clearly recorded in the RHI—highlighted as good practice and shared with the wider team.

**7.29** Offering RHIs at the Right Time and in the Right Space - Quality assurance and participation feedback highlighted that engagement often faltered when RHIs were offered at unsuitable times or in inappropriate settings. This was addressed through:

- Peer Supervision discussions to problem-solve on a case-by-case basis.
- Guidance on checking with the child and their carers to determine the most suitable time and space.
- Flexibility to delay RHIs when needed to ensure meaningful engagement.

*Example:* A practitioner delayed an RHI after learning from the child’s mother that the young person was not in the right frame of mind. The interview was conducted the following day, resulting in a positive interaction and the beginning of a trusted relationship.

**7.30** Participation and Feedback - Every six months, Positive Steps gathers feedback from children, parents/carers, and social workers. This includes:

- Perceptions of the value of RHIs
- Experiences of the MFH service
- Suggestions for improvement

**7.31** A recent survey focused on children who are harder to engage. Key findings included:

#### *1. Person, Time, and Space Matter*

RHIs were seen as most beneficial when delivered by the right person, at the right time, in a comfortable setting, and when they felt purposeful. The team has since agreed to delay RHIs when these conditions are not met, which has improved engagement.

#### *2. Building Trusted Relationships*

Children were more likely to engage once a trusted relationship had been established. To support this, practitioners now seek advice from those who know the child best and, where appropriate, attend RHIs alongside social workers or carers.

#### *3. Breaking Down Barriers*

Despite best efforts, some children remain reluctant to engage. To address this, the team co-produced a “leave behind” leaflet with young people and the Youth Justice

Speech and Language Therapist. This one-page, poster-style document explains the purpose of the RHI in accessible, non-judgemental language. It is left with parents/carers when engagement is not possible and is also available for display in placements. Feedback has been positive, with children noting that the language felt “comforting” and “non-judgemental.”

More recently in Quarter 2 of 2025/2026 feedback has been sought from children and young people, parents, and carers. In total Positive Steps spoke to 9 children aged 14-17. This included 3 females and 6 males. 2 children had no service involvement, 3 were receiving support from Early Help, 3 were supported as Children in Need, 4 were Cared Experienced, and 1 was open to the Complex Safeguarding Team.

- 7.32** 6 out of the 9 children understood to purpose of the return home interview. Answers included, **“to check on the wellbeing of the child”** and **“to understand the bigger picture about what is going on in our lives and to keep us safe.”**
- 7.33** All children said they felt comfortable during the RHI. Most felt that they could speak freely during the RHI, except for one who said, **“I am careful what I say.”**
- 7.34** All the children said they felt listened to by the MFH worker and they were interested in what they had to say during the RHI. Each child said that the MFH worker provided them with helpful advice that no improvements to the RHI or the Oldham MFH service are required.
- 7.35** All the parents and carers who were spoken to felt that the MFH worker communicated well with their child during the RHI and helped them to the best of their ability.
- 7.36** Each parent and carers said they felt the MFH worker made their child comfortable and allowed them to speak freely during the RHIs. Most parents and carers felt that all the needed questions were asked during the RHI and that they were helpful, except one parent who felt that their child having a transgender boyfriend needed to be discussed with them.
- 7.37** All the parents and carers said that they feel included in the decision making about what will happen next after their child is reported missing. One parent said that they appreciate how their feelings are considered following their child’s MFH episode and it brought to the child’s attention how it can impact the family.

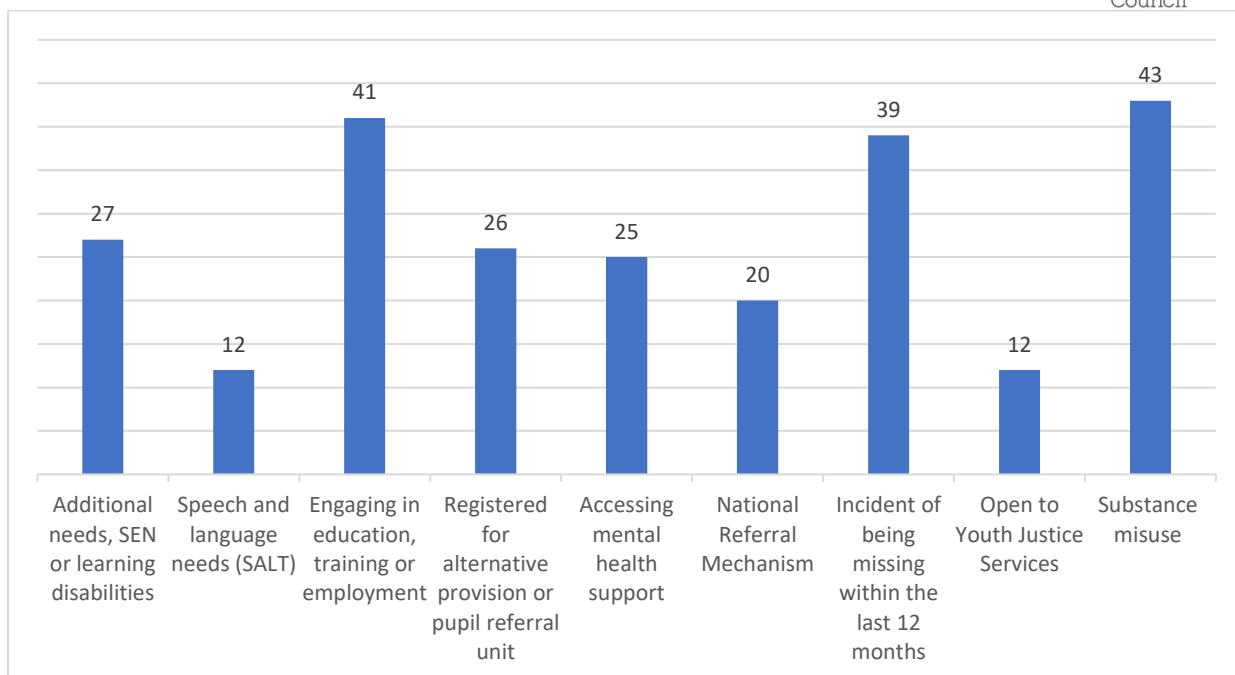
## Building Professional and Public Confidence

- 8.1** Since the publication of the Review of Historic Child Sexual Exploitation in June 2022, the partners within the hub have been working towards improving the public's confidence in relation to the response to Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 8.2** There continues to be wider publication of the successful work into tackling CSE within the Oldham Borough. As mentioned earlier in the report, the Complex Safeguarding Hub are involved in the ongoing police operation into the historic CSE, the social care team are involved in both the victim's operation and the perpetrator strand of the investigation. The team have also offered support, and continue to offer support, to the identified historic CSE survivors.
- 8.3** In July 2025 the Complex Safeguarding hub underwent the first part of the Peer Review undertaken by the GM. The feedback received from this peer review was positive with the below being identified as areas of strength:
- There is a strong ethos in the Complex Safeguarding Team of building trusted relationships which support children to be safe, resilient and to thrive.
  - Multiagency working is a strength, with clear partner engagement, role definition and regular reviews.
  - WISE assessments are honest and transparent.
  - Parental engagement and the role of the family worker in the team is a strength.
  - Strong transitional safeguarding approaches are in place.
  - Disruption activity described as tenacious, creative and child centred.
  - The Trusted Relationship therapists' formulations with children have improved trauma informed understanding and planning.
  - Supervision records are described as reflective and analytical.
  - Feedback received from children and young people was positive, alongside the feedback received from parents and carers.
  - GMP feedback commented that the response by officers to children and young people is child focused.
- 8.4** Areas of reflection identified within the Peer Review were:
- There were aspects of plans which could have benefitted from a more strength-based focus.
  - Case recordings could be reframed to be more trauma informed.
  - The current Complex Safeguarding nurse vacancy was commented on in general, as CST nurses build strong and trusted relationships with children. The impact of this vacancy was noted in respect of one young person.
- 8.5** As evidenced throughout this report there is a strong partnership both within the Complex Safeguarding Team and across services from strategic partners to grass root level practitioners. The team actively contributes to the Greater Manchester Complex

Safeguarding delivery plan on a strategic and operational level – being a regular attendee at steering groups, practitioner forums, and contributing to surveys and areas of research.

## Performance

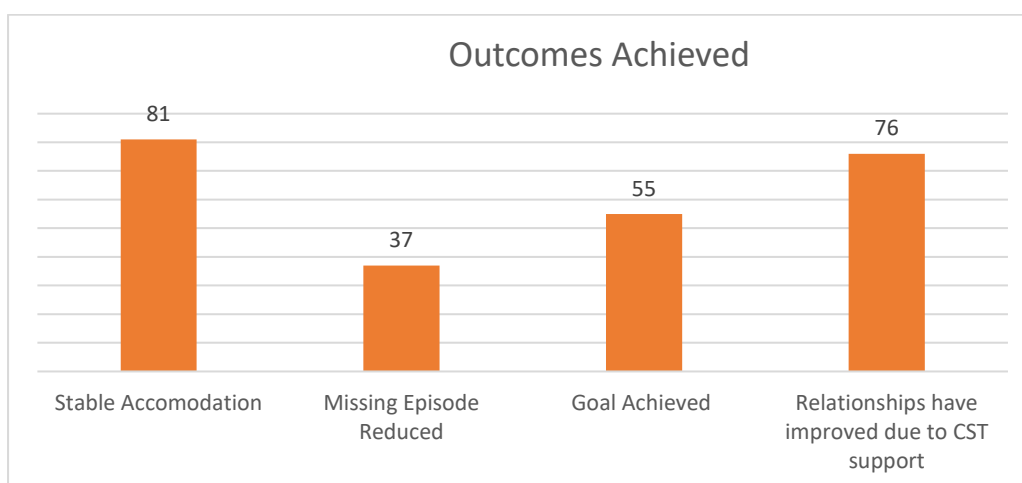
- 9.1** Performance data is provided on a quarterly basis into the GM Complex Safeguarding Hub. This provides analysis of both the local and Greater Manchester trends, this also includes wider demographics, such as victims, offenders, trends, and themes. This data contributes to decision making, by the GM Complex Safeguarding Hub, in relation to the wider strategy and service deliver.
  
- 9.2** Since July 2024, the Complex Safeguarding Hub has received 132 referrals, with 67% accepted into the service for direct support. Referrals that did not meet the threshold for the Hub were appropriately signposted to alternative services such as Keeping Our Girls Safe (KOGs), Catch 22, Prevention & Diversion, or other relevant agencies. In some cases, advice and guidance were provided to the allocated teams to ensure the young person's needs were still addressed.
  
- 9.3** Of the 132 referrals into the Complex Safeguarding Hub, 55% of these were in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation, 30% were in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation and the remaining referrals were in relation to dual exploitation, 15%.
  
- 9.4** Since April 2024 the caseload held within Complex Safeguarding have remained at a level that is in line with the GM's recommended 12 young people per worker, at this time there are 62 young people open to the team. These figures do not consider the 93 young people closed to the team, between July 2024 and June 2025.
  
- 9.5** The data that is gathered within the Complex Safeguarding Hub, and subsequently provided to Greater Manchester, enables a greater understanding of issues affecting young people we work with, alongside providing a greater understanding of indicators of risk. The graph below provides a summary of the main issues currently affecting the young people open to the Complex Safeguarding Hub.
  
- 9.6** As can be seen from the graph, 69% of the young people currently open to the team are affected by substance misuse issues alongside missing from home/care clearly being a significant risk factor, with over 62% of the young people open to the team having had at least one reported incident of being missing from home/care within the last 12 months. What is to be noted is that in comparison to the previous twelve months there has been a significant improvement in education, employment, and training, with 72% of the young people open to the team currently engaging in education, employment or training.



**9.7** There has also been a focus on the outcomes achieved for young people at the end of our involvement, examples of which are indicated below. 93 young people were closed to the team between July 2024 – June 2025.

**9.8** Upon closure 59% of the young people had achieved a positive goal/aspiration that they themselves had set upon opening to the team, this could be securing employment, returning to education, or engaging in a positive activity. 88% of young people, upon closure to Complex Safeguarding, were within stable accommodation, this is a key safety factor in reducing the risks around exploitation.

**9.9** The graph below demonstrates the outcomes achieved which relate to the issues above thereby providing an overview of the impact of the team in supporting young people with these key areas.



## Key Priorities for 2025 - 2026

- 10.1** As a multi-agency team, we recognise that complex and contextual safeguarding is an ever changing, rapidly increasing area of extra familial harm for children and young people. As a team we need to be able to respond and adapt to the harm that young people face outside of their families from those that want to exploit them for their own means. It is envisioned that through the delivery of our key priorities for the coming year, this will enable us to prioritise the safeguarding of our young people by focusing on the context of harm and improving disruption thereof; whilst continuing to bring criminals to justice.
- 10.2** The Key Priorities for 2025 – 2026 are outlined on the below plan on a page, this is supported by the service improvement plan.

# Complex Safeguarding Service Achieving Excellence Plan 2025



Children, young people and their families are at the centre of everything we do to develop their strength and resilience, ensuring all children and young people have a stable life and reach their full potential.

## Service Priorities and Actions

Service Priority 1: Practice and Partnerships  
Quality social work, working closely with our partners.

**Aim:** To provide consistently good, targeted interventions that provide a holistic and rapid response to prevent the escalation of risk.

**Key Actions:**

- We will promote and embed a strong partnership led multi-agency team, working collaboratively with key partner agencies to support multi-agency information sharing, decision making and response to risk.
- We will ensure children and young people's needs are identified efficiently and they have access to the most appropriate service to meet their presenting needs.
- We will support and promote a breath of quality assurance activity to assure ourselves that CYPF are receiving consistently good practice.
- We will strengthen our close the loop activity through broader dissemination of key findings and themes to support a learning and reflective environment through regular service briefings.

Service Priority 2: Place  
A local home for every child in care and care leaver

**Aim:** To ensure children and young people are able to live in safe and nurturing environments to support them to reach their full potential.

**Key Actions:**

- We will train all practitioners to undertake holistic, analytical assessments that clearly identify risk and mitigating factors to support children and young people to feel safe and to thrive.
- We will strengthen our prevention offer for Serious Youth Violence and Child Criminal Exploitation across the partnership.
- We will implement a contextual safeguarding approach across the partnership.
- We will improve the quality of return home interviews to ensure that push and pull factors are identified.

Service Priority 3: People  
A stable and permanent workforce committed to Oldham.

**Aim:** We want all children, young people and families to have receive a consistent service.

**Key Actions:**

- We will develop an effective induction programme for all staff, in partnership with the social work academy.
- We will provide consistently good quality of training programmes for the workforce to support broader development within complex safeguarding.
- We will provide strong training and development for our team managers to ensure they can provide consistently good, reflective supervision.
- We will support our future senior leaders by providing opportunities to access NWADCS management and leadership training opportunities.

### Evidence of Impact – Success Measures

- Quality assurance will demonstrate improved quality of contacts and the right interventions for children and families.
- Case reviews will identify majority of cases to be 'good' or 'outstanding'.
- Improved safety and stability for children and young people supported by Complex Safeguarding.







## **Report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Board**

### **Children's Services - update on Financial Performance, Action Plan and Transformation and Sustainability Programme**

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Shaid Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

**Officer Contact:** Anthony Decrop, Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help

**Report Authors:** Sheila Garara, Assistant Director Children's Services Integration / Nicola Harrop, Finance Manager

**27 November 2025**

---

#### **Purpose of the Report**

This is an update to a previous report presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board on 17 June 2025 titled 'Children's Services - update on Financial Performance, Action Plan and Transformation and Sustainability Programme' to outline progress in relation to Children's Social Care and Early Help action plans and financial performance.

#### **Executive Summary**

##### **Financial position**

The 2025/26 projected month 6 position for Children's Social Care and Early Help is a pressure of £5.278m.

##### **Children's Social Care Demand**

Children's Social Care is experiencing slightly reduced volume but high complexity of demand demonstrating the impact of contextual factors facing families in Oldham. Services continue to effectively manage demand and maintain manageable caseloads in a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

##### **Achieving Excellence Strategy and Action Plan**

Through the delivery of the 'Achieving Excellence' strategy and action plan, service leaders across Children's Social Care and Early Help, working with our partners, continue to drive improvement in the quality of our work with vulnerable children, young people, and their families.

##### **Children's Transformation and Sustainability Programme**

The programme continues to deliver ambitious plans across three strategic areas: earlier support for families, placement sufficiency and digital innovation. The programme is making progress to deliver targets and has direct oversight from the lead member for children and young people.

Children's Services in Oldham are keeping children and young people safe, managing and reducing demand for statutory intervention and improving outcomes. We are in a strong position to further enhance the delivery of timely and effective services to support vulnerable children, young people, and their families.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board notes the report and progress to date.

### Children and Young People Scrutiny Board

27 November 2025

#### 1 The current financial position of Children's Social Care

1.1 As with previous financial years, the service continues to experience significant financial pressures in 2025/26. The previous report, to the board in June 2025, reported the final 2024/25 position for Children's Social Care reported a pressure of £12.333m.

1.2 The projected 2025/26 position at month 6 for Children's Social Care and Early Help is a pressure of £5.278m. The table below presents the financial position, by service area.

	2025/26 Budget £k	Forecast £k	Variance £k
Children in Care	53,231	59,091	5,860
Children's Services Integration	2,445	2,215	(230)
Children's Safeguarding	3,564	3,302	(262)
Fieldwork & Family Support	11,681	12,057	376
Early Help	6,344	5,878	(466)
<b>Children's Social Care &amp; Early Help</b>	<b>77,265</b>	<b>82,543</b>	<b>5,278</b>

1.3 **Children in Care** has the most significant pressure and is reporting a pressure of £5.860m at month 6. The main pressure relates to the social care placements budget £5.332m, which is primarily due to continued pressures in externally commissioned placements and reduced contributions from Health for joint funded packages. There is an additional pressure of £0.307m in the Children with Disability Service (CWD) short breaks budget which relates to direct payments and community independent care packages and a pressure of £0.268m across Residential Services.

The table below shows the main contributors to the placements budget pressure:

Placement Pressures	Month 6 Variance £k
Out of Borough	4,564
Semi Independence	(1,059)
Parent and baby assessment	345
Independent Fostering Agency	(728)
Fostering including those placed with Relatives/ Friends	1,488
Other agency agreements, community placement costs	105

UASC grant	(620)
Continuing Health Care funding	1,355
Other charges including contributions from other local authorities	(118)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,332</b>

The Children's investment plan requires savings of £5.459m to be achieved in 2025-26. The service has continued focused reviews of residential care packages and as at month 6 net savings of £2.607m have been achieved against the plan with a balance of £2.852m to be identified by year end.

Budget reductions for Children's Social Care in 2025-26 are £2.169m. At month 6, £2.006m are green, £0.012m amber and £0.151m red. The red and amber are listed below:

- CHS-BR1-708 Social Work Services (Children's Home) £0.137m - RED
- Increase income at Gemini House £0.014m – RED
- Review short breaks policy and review of in-house provision £0.012m – AMBER

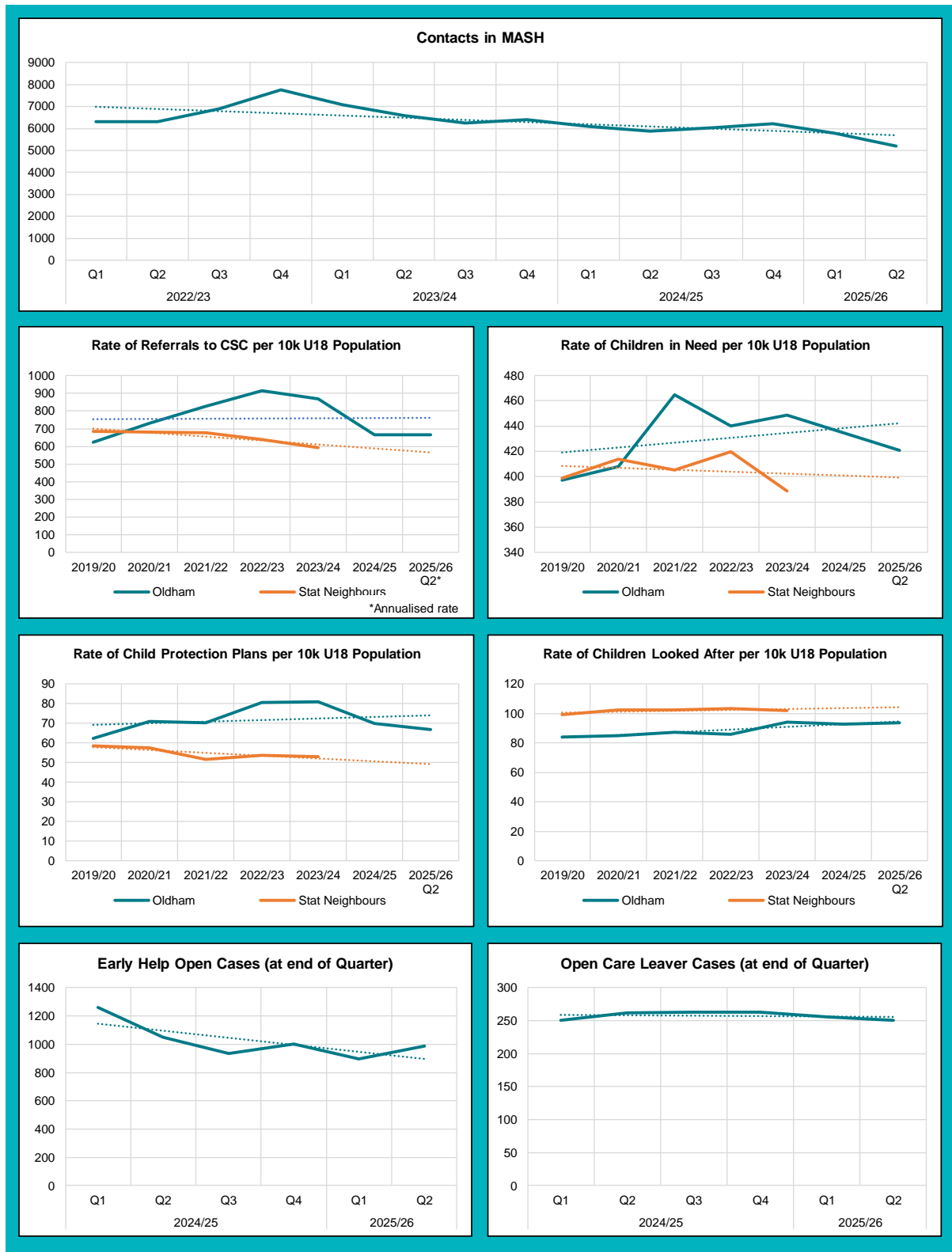
Both the unachieved budget reductions and the gap on the investment plan are contributing factors in the placements budget pressure.

- 1.3 **Fieldwork and Family Support** is reporting a pressure of £0.376m. The service continues to have reliance on agency staff (£0.409m) and a pressure against legal costs (£0.072m) offset by reduced costs in the no recourse to public funds budget (£0.109m).
- 1.5 **Children's Safeguarding** is reporting an underspend of **£0.262m**. There are vacant posts across the service (£0.223m) and increased income in the Social Worker Academy (£0.046m) and OSCB (£0.028m) which is offsetting a slight pressure on non-pay costs.
- 1.6 **Children's Services Integration** is reporting an underspend of **£0.230m**. There are vacant posts within Business Support (£0.035m) and additional Youth Justice and ICB income (£0.197m).
- 1.7 **Early Help** is reporting an underspend of **£0.466m**. There are vacant posts across Early Help and the Family Support Service and underspends on non-pay costs (£0.212m). There is additional grant income for Domestic Abuse and Reducing Parental Conflict (£0.185m) and ICB income for CAMHS backdated to 2024-25 (£0.069m).

## 2 Children's Social Care and Early Help Demand

- 2.1 In line with high levels of demand nationally and in the Northwest, contextual factors such as poverty, deprivation, cost of living, domestic abuse, mental health and neglect continue to have a significant impact on children and young people in Oldham enjoying a happy, healthy, and safe childhood in their families.
- 2.2 There has been a slight reduction in the level of professionals contacting Children's Social Care and Early Help for advice and support, in quarter 2 2025/26, and referrals for statutory social work services have significantly reduced, almost to pre-pandemic levels. There are reduced numbers open to early help, children and young people on children in need plans, and on child protection plans and sustained numbers of children looked after and care

leavers over the past couple of years, as demonstrated in the charts comparing Oldham to our statistical neighbours.



- 2.3 Whilst overall volume has slightly reduced, complexity of needs continues particularly in Child Protection and Children Looked After, which demonstrates the impact of contextual factors facing families in Oldham. In September 2025, there were 1,871 contacts into the MASH with 364 (19%) of these converting to referrals for statutory services. Children's Social Care and Early Help were providing support to 3,448 children and young people

---

through a range of plans including 916 receiving early help, 1,378 children in need, 407 subject to child protection plans, 599 children looked after and 472 care leavers.

### **3 Achieving Excellence Strategy and Action Plan Update**

3.1 Following the Children's Services inspection in July 2025, we've continued a relentless focus on improving outcomes for children and families through the delivery of the Achieving Excellence in Children's Social Care and Early Help strategy and action plan. Our approach prioritises consistently embedding high-quality, child-centred practice and strengthening multi-agency partnerships to ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right support at the right time.

3.2 The Achieving Excellence action plan is reviewed quarterly, enabling leaders to assess and evidence progress and make informed adjustments that drive further improvements to deliver positive outcomes for vulnerable children, young people, and families in Oldham.

#### **3.3 Key strengths, progress and areas of focus**

We're managing and reducing demand effectively to keep children and young people safe and have continued the momentum of improvement of our services.

#### **Progress on key areas for improvement identified by Ofsted**

- **Management oversight and supervision:** Quality of reflective supervisions in Audit outcomes has improved and remains a priority. Recent supervision thematic review highlights some good examples of reflective supervision; however, others required more frequency of supervision, focus to be reflection, explicit rationale for decisions, and a reduction on retrospective oversight being recorded. These learning have been shared with managers at the Children's Assurance Board and leaders have completed a supervision deep dive where Assistant Directors are implementing action plans. The QA dashboard enables oversight and tracking of closure of audit actions.
- **Harms outside the home:** Quality assurance processes are in place to regularly review return home interviews for children missing from home or care with the commissioned provider. The form is being amended to improve purpose, quality and impact. A multi-agency Missing Panel has been established to reduce and prevent high risk missing episodes.
- **Life Story Work:** We've developed co-produced practice guidance, later life letters and virtual life story books. Records are written to the child, and managers explain their decision making to the child. Further work is required to consistently evidence life story work through quality assurance arrangements.
- **Children at risk of or who present as homeless:** The joint protocol between housing and children's social care has been updated and re-launched in July 2025. Joint assessments and referrals to advocacy services are now explicitly completed.
- **Safety Planning:** Staff confidence has improved through targeted training and quality assurance work, particularly around domestic abuse safety planning. Consistent, high-quality safety planning and capturing child's voice remains a development priority.

#### **Help and Protection**

- **Thresholds and Early Help:** The revised threshold criteria (Continuum of Need) work with partners has led to a reduction in repeat contacts into the MASH. Family Hubs continue to have increased accessibility and range of services to support families earlier within their local communities. Early intervention support has helped to reduce referrals to statutory services by 22.4% over the past 12 months, with 85% of families achieving positive outcomes following targeted early help intervention.

- **Young Carers:** Needs are identified and information shared between children's social care and the commissioned provider through lunch and learn sessions; recording of young carers assessments in the case management system has been established. The focus is on embedding quality assurance processes and establishing a young carers and parents steering group and pilot collaboration sessions at Beever Family Hub to further strengthen localised partnership working to identify, engage and support young carers.
- **Domestic Abuse:** There is a timely response and targeted support for high risk domestic abuse, with ongoing training for practitioners and White Ribbon week from 24 November. We are developing a domestic abuse prevention offer to reduce prevalence.
- **Neglect:** There is child-centred intervention and protection in response to neglect, supported by training for professionals in identifying neglect at the earliest opportunity. The challenge is the low rate of completion of the Graded Care Profile 2 assessment. This will be discussed at the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership to explore developing a bespoke tool for Oldham building on the early help neglect checklist.

### Children in Care

- **Permanence Planning:** 95% of children have a permanence plan with active consideration of adoption, special guardianship, kinship care, long term foster care and foster to adopt placements. The permanence policy is to be revised, and multi-agency care planning meetings need to be embedded to ensure permanence is achieved and where not achieved, this is escalated by the IRO through the dispute resolution process.
- **Health Assessments:** The process has been strengthened and management oversight increased. We continue work with health partners to complete within timescales.
- **Placement Sufficiency:** Internal capacity has increased with new children's homes and more foster carers. The council commitment to direct match Care Leavers to 50% of all available properties is successfully leading to more care leavers living independently. There is active engagement with local providers to secure placements and we're actively supporting the delivery of the GM RCC and Project Skyline to deliver better commissioning arrangements and 10 new children's homes across GM.
- **Placement Stability:** 58% of children in our care are placed in our own provision, which is an improved positive position. Multi-agency disruption meetings, support from therapeutic supervising social workers and Mockingbird hub carers for foster carers and the adolescent support unit help prevent placement breakdowns.
- **Educational Outcomes:** There is strong support via the Virtual School. School attendance is high in primary (95.5%) but lower in secondary (88.5%) and special schools (78.3%) with a targeted action plan in place. 2025 Key Stage 2 data indicate an improvement in outcomes across all subject areas and is broadly in line with the combined outcomes from the previous year with 42% achieving expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths. Outcomes in Key Stage 4 has reduced from 2024 with 13% of children achieving a pass (Grade 4+) in both English and Maths and remains broadly in line for those achieving a Grade 5+ pass (9%). A lower proportion of children looked after were entered for GCSE examinations, with alternatives such as functional skills being used to support young people to achieve an appropriate qualification to support pathways into Post 16 provision.

### Care Leavers

- **Transitions:** All care leavers have a dedicated PA from age 17 with an increasing number of joint supervisions to develop relationships and promote smooth transitions to post-18 services. There are challenges in recruiting to the transitions team which is impacting on earlier transition planning from age 14 collaboratively with adult social care.



- **EET Support:** 64% of 17–18 year olds and 47% of 19–21 year olds are in education, employment, or training (EET) which is an improving position, particularly for 17-18 years olds. Barriers include financial support and post-year 13 destinations. There are three care leavers undertaking apprenticeships in the council.

#### **Workforce Stability**

- **Stability:** Use of agency social workers has continued to reduce to 19.4% and turnover reduced to 17.1%. There is a strong student/apprentice and newly qualified social worker pipeline through the 'Grow our Own' model and a positive retention culture.
- **Caseloads:** Average social worker caseloads are manageable at 17.6. 40% of workers have <15 cases and a further 17% have 15-19 cases.
- **Workforce Development:** There is a robust learning and development offer with a focus on child sexual abuse, safety planning, purposeful intervention and planning, assessment and analysis.

#### **Practice Quality**

- **Quality Assurance:** Practice quality and consistency continue to evidence positive outcomes for children and families, especially in child's voice, planning and visits. Consistency in assessments, supervision, chronologies and multi-agency working are the areas of focus.
- **Family Engagement:** 55% of practice audits include family involvement and 27% include partnership feedback. Areas of focus based on family feedback are changes in social worker and communication.

#### **Systems, Data and Insights**

- **System Developments and Reporting Tools:** We continue to enhance the bespoke centralised data system and dashboards to provide real-time performance tracking for management oversight and intelligence led decision making. Significant case management system developments for better recording of key practice areas include young carers flag, care leavers post 18 and foster carer visits. The focus for system developments includes private fostering, transitions, short breaks and domestic abuse. Staff capacity to develop and test changes and the system upgrade which will be taking place over the coming months are a challenge in progressing these areas of work.

### **3.4 Priorities in 2025/26**

Continuing to build on the progress across the themes outlined above, our priorities include:

- Further strengthening the consistency and quality of practice across the seven fundamentals.
- Further work to embed the Continuum of Need across the partnership as we continue to receive a high number of contacts due to partners seeking support and advice.
- Continued embedding of learning from quality assurance activities.
- Delivery of our local and GM placement sufficiency commitments.
- Maintaining and further strengthening workforce stability with more permanent workers.
- Transforming our services through the design and implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme exploring our multi-agency approach to family help, child protection and family networks in line with national reforms.

## **4 Children's Transformation and Sustainability Programme Update**

- 4.1 The children's transformation and sustainability programme delivers ambitious plans across three strategic areas linked to the council pillars of change outlined in the Ready for the Future corporate plan:

- **Earlier Support for Families:** delivering more support for families, at an earlier stage, preventing the need for intensive support from statutory services, through the co-design and implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme in line with national reforms.
- **Placement Sufficiency:** providing a stable home for every child in our care and care leavers by increasing the number of council foster carers, residential provision, local externally commissioned placements and securing suitable accommodation for over 18s care leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).
- **Digital Innovation:** Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to improve efficiency in the delivery of services, reducing administrative tasks to enable more time to directly support children, young people and families.

4.2 Workstream progress and impact are outlined below:

#### 4.2.1 Strand 1: Earlier Support for Families

- The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme is a national reform to deliver priorities outlined in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill currently going through parliament.
- The FFP Board is driving the governance arrangements and planning across the three core workstreams of Family Help, multi-agency child protection teams and family network models in line with the national guidance.
- Partnership and workforce engagement briefings and events have taken place as part of planning and co-design phases including a successful partnership engagement event at Failsworth Town Hall on 5 November.
- We've attended DfE webinars and engaged with pathfinder LAs and other regionals LAs that have started to develop their models of delivery.
- We are taking a phased, no risk approach, particularly in relation to Family Help. We will be piloting Family Help in the South District, which already has solid foundations with its Family Hubs and targeted early help offers.
- There continues to be a reduction in referrals and re-referrals into children's services based on families that have received early help and social work support.

#### 4.2.2 Strand 2: Placement Sufficiency

##### Foster Care

- There are 396 children placed in internal fostering with 123 of these in kinship care. This is a positive indication of how the service is utilising our foster carers to ensure children are placed in a stable and caring family home.
- Three specialist foster care 'Mockingbird' hubs are successfully supporting children and young people to remain in placements with their foster carers providing stability and contributing to managing significant placement costs which, if the placements had broken down, the children would most likely be placed in high cost placements. We are on track to open a further hub in March 2026.
- The Fostering Service has a number of recruitment and retention initiatives, including the Step Forward in Foster Care programme, providing an enhanced allowance to recruit skilled carers to accommodate younger children placed in external residential children's homes.

##### Residential Placements, Supported Accommodation and Independent Living

- We're delivering our commitment to open three new internal children's homes. Blackshaw Lane Children's Home in Crompton (4 placements) is open. Hayle Road in St James (2 placements) has been registered with Ofsted and children will be placed in November/December. Rosary Road in Medlock Vale (2 placements) is at the

---

procurement of the refurbishment design stage and is forecasted to be fully operational in 2027/28.

- Targeted commissioning and market management has created 13 local semi-independent placements (for 16-18 year olds), 13 local over-18s commissioned placements and 15 housing direct matches for care leavers, with continued work through fortnightly tracking of externally commissioned placements to reduce placement costs, ensure more children in our care are placed locally and support more Care Leavers into independent living via housing matches and commissioning arrangements.
- First Choice Homes have pledged to deliver a bespoke housing offer for our care leavers which is being launched on 28 November.

#### **4.2.3 Strand 3: Digital Innovation**

- Children's Services are piloting the use of AI tools developed for statutory social work to produce instant minutes of meetings, visits and case supervisions. We're also piloting the use of AI in the production of Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) for children with SEND following assessment. Both projects are in the early planning stages with the opportunities to extend the use of AI models across council services to improve efficiency.

### **5 Conclusion**

- 5.1 Service leaders continue to effectively manage and reduce demand for children's services in Oldham, maintaining manageable caseloads to an average of 17.6, through the recruitment and retention of social workers and managers, to be able to provide timely and intensive support and intervention work with children, young people, and families. There is a stable senior leadership team driving ambitious and innovative transformation within a culture of continuous learning and improvement.
- 5.2 The 2025/26 pressure position of £5.278m reflects the significant pressures Children's Service has faced in recent years, mainly as a result of increased external residential costs for Looked After Children and the Council's position reflects the national pressures in the sector. The budget process for 2025/26 reflected emerging pressures, particularly around Children's Services, however, the continued increase in demand for the service means that the Directorate will need to continue to work hard to contain pressures in 2025/26. Robust monitoring processes are in place and future reports will be brought back to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board on the 2025/26 financial position.
- 5.3 Council-wide strategies with an increased focus on early intervention and prevention in local communities seek to address the high levels of demand for statutory services. Additionally, through the continued delivery of the Achieving Excellence strategy and action plan, and Children's Transformation and Sustainability Programme, Children's Services in Oldham are keeping children and young people safe, improving outcomes and are in a strong position to further enhance the delivery of timely and effective services to vulnerable children, young people and their families.

This page is intentionally left blank

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY BOARD

## WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

Agenda item	Purpose	Portfolio lead & officer lead	Method of scrutiny	Additional information
<b>Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b>				
Corporate Performance Report – 2024/25 Q4	To receive and consider the quarter 4 performance report	Portfolio – Children and Young People and Education and Skills  Attendees: - Julie Daniels - Tony Decrop - Matt Bulmer	Report	
Family Hubs Programme	To receive an annual update report on the Family Hubs Programme	Portfolio – Children and Young People.  Attendees: - Tony Decrop - Bruce Penhale	Report	
Children's Services - update on financial performance, Action Plan and Childrens Transformation and Sustainability Programme	To receive a periodic 6 month update report and to scrutinise the performance in respect of financial performance in Children's Services and delivery of the Achieving Excellence Action Plan and Transformation and Sustainability programme.	Portfolio – Children and Young People.  Attendees: - Tony Decrop - Sheila Garara - Andy Cooper	Report	Agreed in 2024/25 to move from March to June reporting to cover previous year outturn position
<b>Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2025</b>				

Youth Council annual report	Annual Report on events and activities commissioned by the Youth Council	Portfolio – Children and Young People.  Attendees: - Jodie Barber - Member of the youth council	Report	Moved from March meeting as annual report isn't available until May
Youth Justice Plan 2025/26	To scrutinise the Youth Justice Plan for 2025/26	Portfolio - Children and Young People.  Attendees: - Julie Daniels. - Paul Axon, Chief Executive Positive Steps. - Claire Griffiths, Head of Youth Justice, Positive Steps	Plan	
<b>Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025</b>				
SEND update	To receive and consider the SEND priority action plan and improvement programme update report	Portfolio – Education and Skills.  Attendees: - Matt Bulmer - Katie Charlton	Report	
Children, Young People and Families Plan 2025/26	To scrutinise the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2025/26	Portfolio – Children and Young People.  Attendees: - Julie Daniels - Sheila Garara	Plan	
<b>Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025</b>				

Performance Assurance Report – 2025/26 Q1 and Q2	To receive and consider the quarter 1 and 2 performance report	Portfolio – Children and Young People and Education and Skills  Attendees: - Julie Daniels - Tony Decrop - Matt Bulmer	Report	
CSE Steering Group Annual Report	To receive and consider the annual report	Portfolio – Children and Young People.  Attendees: - Tony Decrop - Michelle Bernasconi - Natassja Gollcher	Report	
Children's Services - update on financial performance, Action Plan and Childrens Transformation and Sustainability Programme	To receive a periodic 6 month update report and to scrutinise the performance in respect of financial performance in Children's Services and delivery of the Achieving Excellence Action Plan and Transformation and Sustainability programme.	Portfolio – Children and Young People.  Attendees: - Tony Decrop - Sheila Garara Andy Cooper	Report	Agreed in 2024/25 to move from March to June reporting to cover previous year outturn position. This will be the 6 month update from then.
<b>Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026</b>				
Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report	To receive and consider the Board's Annual Report	Portfolio – Children and Young People.  Attendees: - Tony Decrop, - Jayne Haigh	Report	
Primary and Secondary School Outcomes	To receive and consider the annual update report	Portfolio – Education and Skills	Report	

		Attendees: - Matt Bulmer - Tony Shepherd		
Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	To receive an update report on participation and NEET rates and on activities looking to ensure appropriate opportunities for 16-18 year olds.	Portfolio – Education and Skills.  Attendees: - Matt Bulmer - Amanda Youlden	Report	
<b>Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026</b>				
Performance Assurance Report – 2025/26 Q3	To receive and consider the quarter 3 performance report	Portfolio – Children and Young People and Education and Skills  Attendees: - Julie Daniels - Tony Decrop - Matt Bulmer	Report	
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report Oldham 2025/26.	To receive and consider the annual report	Portfolio – Education and Skills  Attendees: - Matt Bulmer - Tony Shepherd	Report	
Mental Health Services Wait Times Task and Finish Group report	To consider the report of the task and finish group	Portfolio – Children and Young People and Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Report of the task and finish group	



Task and finish group deep dives:

Deep dive area:	Expanded proposal:
Issues impacting children and young people	Workshop to include lived experience from children and young people.
Corporate parenting responsibilities	Workshop with the Corporate Parenting Board to understand corporate parenting responsibilities and to seek assurance that the role is effectively being carried out, to include feedback from children and young people.
Mental Health Service Wait Times	Task and Finish Group to look at issues related to waiting times and the action being undertaken to reduce these.

**Note: papers to be submitted to constitutional services no later than 8 days before the meeting to be published on the council website.**

This page is intentionally left blank

## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
FCR-01-25	Transformation Partnership	Executive Director - Resources	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: To report on the Council's transformation partnership work.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Transformation Partnership</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices</p> <p>Report to be considered in Public/Private: NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and it is not in the public interest to disclose the information because it relates to the financial or business affairs of the Council or a third party.</p>				
EE-02-25	Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) Utilities	Director of Public Health	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: To report on the provision of utilities at sites across Oldham Community Leisure's (OCL) footprint.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) Utilities</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices</p> <p>Report to be considered in Public/Private: NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and it is not in the public interest to disclose the information because it relates to the financial or business affairs of the Council or a third party.</p>				
EE-03-25 <b>New!</b>	Oldham Active (OCL) - Agency Model	Director of Public Health	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet

## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
<p>Description: To report on the provision of an agency model for Oldham Active scheme, at leisure sites across Oldham Community Leisure's footprint.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Oldham Active (OCL) - Agency Model</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices</p> <p>Report to be considered in Public/Private: NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and it is not in the public interest to disclose the information because it relates to the financial or business affairs of the Council or a third party.</p>				
EDS-07-25	Speech, Language and Communication Needs Business Case	Director of Education, Skills & Early Years	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: To develop a borough-wide speech, language and communication needs business case</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Speech, Language and Communication Needs Business Case</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various appendices attached to the report</p> <p>Document(s) to be considered in public or private: Public</p>				
EDS-11-25	Change Partnership Programme (CPP) delivery (inc. ELSEC/APST): grant requirements	Director of Education, Skills & Early Years	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet

## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
<p>Description: To highlight funding opportunities to the Council available from the Change Partnership Programme.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Change Partnership Programme (CPP) delivery (inc. ELSEC/APST): grant requirements</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various appendices attached to the report</p> <p>Document(s) to be considered in public or private: Public</p>				
RBO-09-25	Sites of Biological Importance Update	Deputy Chief Executive - Place	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: The reason for this decision is to designate a new Site of Biological Importance (SBI) and adopt changes which have occurred to other SBI boundaries within the borough.</p> <p>Appendix 1 provides a map of the new SBI (Ladcastle Heath) and maps of the other SBI boundary changes (Medlock Headwater &amp; Strinesdale, Moorgate Quarry and Armit Road Lodge). These changes are outlined in Appendix 2 and 3 alongside details of the other SBIs reviewed.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Sites of Biological Importance Update</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various appendices attached to the report</p> <p>Document(s) to be considered in public or private: Public</p>				

## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
HLO-04-25	Temporary Accommodation Procurement Exercises – Nightly-Paid and Emergency Accommodation	Director of Communities	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: The report provides an update on proposals regarding Temporary Accommodation Procurement Exercises – Nightly-Paid and Emergency Accommodation.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Temporary Accommodation Procurement Exercises – Nightly-Paid and Emergency Accommodation</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various</p> <p>Report to be considered in Public</p>				
HLO-05-25	Extend the contract term for delivery of Accommodation Based Services for 12 months until 31st March 2027	Director of Communities	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: The report provides an update on the proposal to Extend the contract term for delivery of Accommodation Based Services for 12 months until 31st March 2027.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Extend the contract term for delivery of Accommodation Based Services for 12 months until 31st March 2027</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various</p> <p>Report to be considered in Public</p>				
FCR-08-25 <b>New!</b>	Revenue Monitor and Capital Investment Programme 2025/26 Month 5	Director of Finance	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet

## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
<p>Description: The report provides an update on the Council's 2025/26 forecast revenue budget position and the financial position of the capital programme as at the period ending 31 August 2025 (Month 5). Document(s) to be considered in public or private: Proposed Report Title:  Revenue Monitor and Capital Investment Programme 2025/26 Month 5  Background Documents: Appendices – Various  Report to be considered in Public</p>				
HL-07-25 <b>New!</b>	Approval of Grant Funding Agreement with Greater Manchester Combined Authority for the provision of Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 Phase Three 2025/27	Director of Communities	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: The report seeks approval of Grant Funding Agreement with Greater Manchester Combined Authority for the provision of Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 Phase Three 2025/27  Proposed Report Title: Approval of Grant Funding Agreement with Greater Manchester Combined Authority for the provision of Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 Phase Three 2025/27  Background Documents: Appendices – Various  Report to be considered in Public</p>				

## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
RBO-04-25	Approval to a) publish the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan for public consultation; and b) submit the Plan for independent examination	Deputy Chief Executive - Place	17 <sup>th</sup> November 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: Approval to a) publish the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan for public consultation; and b) submit the Plan for independent examination</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various</p> <p>Document(s) to be considered in public or private: Public</p>				
EDS-12-25 <b>New!</b>	Approval to exercise the option to extend Short Breaks Play and Leisure Contract	Director of Education, Skills & Early Years	17 <sup>th</sup> November 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description: Cabinet is asked to approve an option to extend the existing short breaks, play and leisure contract.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: Approval to exercise the option to extend Short Breaks Play and Leisure Contract</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various</p> <p>Document(s) to be considered in public or private: public</p>				
HSC-14-25 <b>New!</b>	Section 75 Partnership Agreement with the NHS Northern Care Alliance	Director of Public Health	15 <sup>th</sup> December 2025	Cabinet



## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
<p>Description: to seek approval for a Section 75 Partnership Agreement with the NHS Northern Care Alliance</p> <p>Proposed report Title: Section 75 Partnership Agreement with the NHS Northern Care Alliance</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various</p> <p>Document(s) to be considered in public or private: public</p>				
NEI-09-25 <b>New!</b>	United Utilities Plc Partnership Agreement	Director of Environment	15 <sup>th</sup> December 2025	Cabinet
<p>Description approval for the Council to enter into a partnership agreement with United Utilities PLC.</p> <p>Proposed Report Title: United Utilities Plc Partnership Agreement</p> <p>Background Documents: Appendices – Various</p> <p>Document(s) to be considered in public or private: public</p>				

### Key:

**New!** - indicates an item that has been added this month

Notes:

## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
------------------------	---------------------------	--------	---------------	----------------

1. The procedure for requesting details of documents listed to be submitted to decision takers for consideration is to contact the Contact Officer contained within the Key Decision Sheet for that item. The contact address for documents is Oldham Council, Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham, OL1 1UH. Other documents relevant to those matters may be submitted to the decision maker.
2. Where on a Key Decision Sheet the Decision Taker is Cabinet, the list of its Members are as follows: Councillors Arooj Shah (Chair of Cabinet), Elaine Taylor, Abdul Jabbar MBE, Shaid Mushtaq, Mohon Ali, Barbara Brownridge, Chris Goodwin and Peter Dean.
3. Full Key Decision details (including documents to be submitted to the decision maker for consideration, specific contact officer details and notification on if a report is likely to be considered in private) can be found via the online published plan at:  
<http://committees.oldham.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=144&RD=0>

### Notice of Private Reports

(In accordance with Part 2 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012)

Oldham Borough Council intends to hold a private meeting (or part thereof) of the Cabinet on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025

**Decision to be taken (Agenda Item) Decisions proposed to be taken in private at Cabinet on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025:**

#### a. Transformation Partnership

##### Reason:

The meeting (or part thereof) will be held in exempt session on the grounds that the reports and background papers will contain the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) – information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Council and a third party.

#### b. Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) Utilities Reason:

## KEY DECISION DOCUMENT – COVERING DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 OCTOBER 2025

Key Decision Reference	Subject Area For Decision	Led By	Decision Date	Decision Taker
------------------------	---------------------------	--------	---------------	----------------

The meeting (or part thereof) will be held in exempt session on the grounds that the reports and background papers will contain the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) – information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Council and a third party.

### **Oldham Active (OCL) - Agency Model**

#### **Reason:**

The meeting (or part thereof) will be held in exempt session on the grounds that the reports and background papers will contain the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) – information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Council and a third party.

#### **Representations:**

If you wish to make representations against the intention to hold a private meeting, please send these to Constitutional Services, JR Clynes Building, Cultural Quarter, Greaves Street, Oldham, OL1 1AT or email: [constitutional.services@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:constitutional.services@oldham.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank