

Portfolio Report

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

Children's Social Care and Early Help are providing support to 4,164 Children and Young People (09/07/2024). Following the recent ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services) in Children's Services in which the service was rated 'Good' in all areas, post- inspection action plans are underway to enable the service to drive further improvements over the next 12 months. The service also had a positive Ofsted Annual Conversation on Friday 19th July.

Children's Safeguarding Assessment and Intervention

The Assessment and Intervention service is supporting 1,325 children, including 1,282 children are being supported or assessed as children in need, 33 children are subject to child protection planning/progression into pre-proceedings, and we are supporting 10 children who have recently become looked after.

Safeguarding and Care Planning

We continue to support 867 children within our Safeguarding and Care Planning service. 207 children are subject to child in needs plans, which include No Recourse to Public Funds, and children who are subject to supervision orders following care proceedings. 453 children are subject to child protection plans, of which 99 are within pre proceedings. Six weekly reviews, chaired by the Assistant Director of Social Work Services, ensure those children subject to pre- proceedings are not experiencing delay in the completion of assessments.

We continue to support 207 children who are looked after, 194 of those are subject to ongoing care proceedings. There continues to be both local and national challenges around securing placements for children coming into our care, and we prioritise earlier assessments of family and friends to ensure we are planning for early permanence, for children unable to remain in the care of their primary carer.

Complex Safeguarding Hub

The Complex Safeguarding Hub supports 55 young people at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation, 21% with additional needs. Collaboration with Greater Manchester Police on Serious Youth Violence continues, and school sessions are ongoing.

Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP)

The first Working Together 2023 Task and Finish Group, chaired by the Designated Safeguarding Nurse, brought partners together in June. Terms of reference were agreed with further meetings planned.

GMP held an initial meeting with Greater Manchester Education Support Officers to review what is working well and the areas of improvement with regards to Operation Compass. Moving forward, GMP will be arranging with Education Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's), a subgroup meeting to ensure the concerns raised by DSL's can be shared and responded to.

The DfE, on behalf of the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, have commissioned a project to build a detailed understanding of how to support Safeguarding Partnerships to conduct high-quality learning in response to serious incidents, improve practice and better protect children. OSCP is part of this national project to improve safeguarding practices.

Children Looked After (including Fostering and Adoption)

There are 611 children in care, with 74 admitted in the first quarter, 54 of whom were court-ordered. Internal fostering placements have reached 309, the highest in recent years. Nine Adoption Orders have been granted since April 2024.

Care Leavers

There are 376 care leavers aged 16–25. To further improve the rate of care leavers aged 18 to 25 not in education, employment, and training a strategic approach is being developed to link opportunities with care leavers' ambitions.

Social Work Workforce

We currently have 115 agency workers, with 106 covering social work posts. Off-contract agency staff have been reduced from 34 to 21. The "Grow Your Own" model will bring 20 new ASYE social workers in September/October 2024. The "Choose Oldham" campaign is boosting recruitment.

Early Help

The number of children in targeted early help has increased to 1,180 in 508 families. Re-referral rates into children's services have decreased, and fewer children are escalating into social care. The Early Help system's self-assessment shows progress in multi-agency collaboration, workforce development, and data-driven improvement.

Early Years

Education Recovery programmes have maintained high standards, with 99% of childminders and 96% of group settings rated good or better by Ofsted. The Childcare Expansion and Wraparound Programme is progressing, with under-1s and 1-year-olds exceeding national averages, though validations for 2-year-olds are below the national level. Five Family Hubs are now operational, with 4,140 attendees in May, including 1,667 children, marking an increase of 524 children.

Youth Service

Oldham Youth Mayor Making - Charlotte handed over the reins to Isaac, who was sworn in as the 15th Youth Mayor of Oldham at a ceremony in the Council Chambers. Several youth focused events have taken place over the last period including - Young People co-hosting and facilitating the Hope Hack Event with discussions on tackling Child Criminal Exploitation, knife crime and violence towards women and girls. Oldham also hosted the GM Child Centered Policing event which discussed i youth scrutiny panels and launched a Greater Manchester wide YIAG (Youth Independent Advisory Group). Young people from Oldham's Youth Scrutiny Panel gave a presentation about their group and the impact it has. Summer term has seen the youth service run the summer program with 64 sessions for young people and a full HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) program. On top of the summer program the Youth Service continues to deliver its twilight and evening sessions with at least 25 sessions per week across the district, detached and boroughwide teams.

Children's Commissioning and Transformation

Approval was granted for a full commissioning process for SENDIASS, Targeted Youth Support, and the Youth Justice Service. Meet the Market events are planned, with young people involved in all stages. Placement development continues with 15 new semi-independent beds created and 11 occupied. We are collaborating with providers and GMCA initiatives such as Project Skyline to secure high-quality placements, aiming to create 24 new residential placements over the next 18 months.

The Transformation and Sustainability Programme focuses on defining the Integrated Delivery Model, including increasing connectivity to universal services, implementing the Family Help model, and remodelling Edge of Care services. Progress includes planning permission for Royton, identifying properties for new children's homes, and expanding capacity at Rivendell.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.