



Portfolio Report

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

This report provides an update on the main activity since the last Council meeting relating to Portfolio activities.

Children's Social Care and Early Help are providing support to 3,476 Children and Young People plans - 969 early help, 1,357 children in need, 405 child protection, 597 children looked after and 469 care leavers (1st July 2025).

The timeliness of response to children's needs remains strong across the fundamentals of practice and the stability of the workforce continues to improve with increasingly permanent staffing and success in converting agency workers to permanent employees.

Workforce

I am pleased to share that we've successfully strengthened Social Care teams by recruiting talented social workers for key service areas through tailored recruitment efforts, including the creation of bespoke adverts and a strong pipeline through our 'Grow our Own' model of students and apprentices, ensuring stability and continuity of service. The social work agency rate (23.2%) and turnover rate (18.6%) are continuing a gradual downward trend in May 25. The benefits to families of our recruitment and retention work was reported on BBC's The One Show in April: [Families benefitting from Oldham's social worker training academy - BBC News](#)

Care Planning

Focused work on pre-proceedings and court proceedings by the new Early Permanence Progression Officer is giving a clear line of sight to support improved tracking and timeliness of care planning and impact on children and families.

Youth Violence Prevention

In May, progress was made on tackling serious youth violence through a collaborative Strategic Action Plan informed by thorough research and education feedback. Upcoming youth consultations and strong partnerships with community and youth justice services will help develop a focused strategy aimed at lasting positive change in our communities.

Children in Care and Care Leavers

For children in care and care leavers, we have continued to provide safe, stable placements and support as they transition into adulthood. The service has successfully registered a new Children's Home and I had the privilege of welcoming its first resident to the accommodation at the opening ceremony on 27 June. This home has been delivered as part of the council commitment to creating more internal residential home provision in Oldham. The Fostering Service has grown with a third Mockingbird Hub Carer and updated key policies to enhance recruitment and retention. Care leavers also benefit from the council's 'direct match' housing initiative, strengthening partnership support.

The Annual Stars in their Eyes Awards was held on the 22 June. This is the annual celebration recognizing the achievements of children in care and care leavers. This was a huge success with a record number of nominations and winners in attendance. Children and Young People were congratulated with their awards by elected members, the Mayor, and a high-profile Oldham sports star.

Education, Employment and Training

I am pleased to report more young people aged 18–21 are engaged in education, employment, or training, demonstrating improved progress in supporting their future opportunities. It is positive that we now have three care leavers working within the Council – in Waste Management, Children's Integration and in one of our internal Children's Homes.

Children's Commissioning

The new [Oldham SEND Local Offer](#), co-produced with children and young people, families, and partners, is now live and was officially launched in May at the Oldham Parent Carer Forum annual conference, receiving positive feedback from the community.

Family Help

Our Early Help teams continue to play a vital role in working with families before issues escalate. The number of children open to targeted early help has fallen a little further to around 850 children, with case closures exceeding referrals. This has assisted in managing caseloads, which helps ensure the quality of support.

The Domestic Abuse team have reduced the number of active cases to just under 300, with the new duty model introduced in January working well in delivering a timely response for victims of domestic abuse.

The Family Hubs offer continues to deliver a positive impact. There were over 107,000 views of family hubs material on the website and social media. There was a very positive article about the work of the parenting team on the BBC website at: ['Oldham parenting group changed my life and made me a better person' - BBC News](#) This news story appeared on BBC North West tonight in June.

Families First Partnership

The Families First Partnership Programme (FFP) national reform is progressing well, with strong engagement from the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership and schools. The FFP board has set key priorities focused on Family Help, Multi-agency Child Protection Teams, and Family Networks. The programme emphasises the importance of family group decision-making to effectively involve networks of family and friends in supporting parents to care for children.

Early Years

98% of Early Years providers are good or outstanding. Wrap around places have now expanded to create 764 places currently through 34 providers. This includes 374 new places, 315 expanded places and 70 places where the timings have increased to provide full wrap around provision.

Youth Services

Following the #BeeWell youth council consultation, the #VoiceBox initiative will distribute resources across Oldham's schools to promote youth engagement and awareness of local representatives.

Over 80 young people participated in a boroughwide football tournament that combined sport with workshops on substance misuse and youth violence.

The Castleshaw AirBnB has successfully launched, receiving excellent feedback and upcoming bookings.

Meanwhile, preparations for the summer HAF programme are underway, focusing on securing providers and enhancing support to ensure high-quality delivery.

Summary

Delivering 'Good' Children's Services has had a pivotal contribution in Oldham Council being named Most Improved Council at the 2025 LGC Awards, I want to pass on my thanks to all who work tirelessly to keep children and young people safe and happy to enable them to thrive.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.