

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 3,495 Children and Young People plans, 827 early help, 1,434 children in need, 381 child protection, 599 children looked after and 464 care leavers (3 Sept 2025)

Ofsted Focused Visit

I'm pleased to share that we had a successful Ofsted Focused Visit of the Front Door in July that demonstrated a relentless focus to continuously improve the support and interventions we provide to vulnerable children, young people and their families. Areas for recommendation will be addressed through the Achieving Excellence Action Plan. The published report is at the following link - [Children's Services Focused Visit Report](#). During their time in Oldham, inspectors found a timely response to needs and risk, an effective Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), strong social work practice and I'm really proud that practitioners shared positive feedback about their experiences of working in Oldham, and their strong commitment to delivering the best outcomes. I want to give particular thanks to Julie Daniels and the children's leadership team for their continued drive and passion to deliver excellent services for children.

Workforce

At the end of July 2025, the total Social Work England workforce was 273.65. Our current agency rate is 22.3% and we remain committed to growing our permanent workforce through recruitment and retention initiatives, with a number of permanent social workers joining us in September and October. In September we will celebrate the success of our routes into social work with 20 practitioners commencing their newly qualified social worker roles.

We are continuing to create learning opportunities aligned to quality assurance findings and there is consistent positive feedback received from practitioner forums evidencing the learning culture across the service.

Complex Safeguarding

The Complex Safeguarding Hub has been supporting Operation Sherwood and in July, 3 warrants were issued by GMP and 2 arrests made in relation to historic child sexual abuse. The Complex Safeguarding Team were linked into this action to ensure any relevant safeguarding activity was conducted as a partnership approach.

Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership

Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership have promoted a range of training delivered by the Centre of Expertise on child sexual abuse and will be holding a multi-agency practice week in October with a focus on Protecting Children from sexual abuse. The Safeguarding Advisor for Education led a Prevent working group in the development of a handbook for education as requested by Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) across Oldham alongside delivering training sessions.

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. Of the 597 children in our care, 314 are placed in internal foster care, maintaining strong internal provision. 115 children are in kinship settings. The service is working hard to ensure internal provision is full, with fortnightly tracking meetings. I was delighted to attend the recent launch of Oldham's third Mockingbird Hub, which provides guidance and support to our foster carers and children in care to maintain their placements.

I am pleased to highlight 51% of our young people aged 18 – 21 are in education, employment, and training which is an improving outcome. There are a number of developments continuing with our care leavers such as the partnership work with Get Oldham Working, Oldham Athletic and First Choice Homes. In addition, a group of care leavers have co-produced their own Pathway Plan document which will be implemented in the service.

Family Help

During the last year the number of children open to targeted early help has reduced overall but has stabilised in recent months at between 850-900, impacted by a number of factors: the strengthened Early Help team in MASH who are working with partners to identify the best support for families, the increased availability of early support through family hubs, and the reduced re-referral rate following support by targeted early help.

The Domestic Abuse team are working with just under 300 clients, with most contacted and allocated an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) within 48 hours of a referral being received.

The new structure in the Family Hubs is becoming embedded, and recruitment has taken place to most of the vacant Child and Family Practitioner and Business Support Officer posts. The new staff are being trained on the new systems.

Implementation is continuing to progress on the 2025/26 Family Hubs Delivery Plan. Engagement on the Family Hubs Facebook page more than doubled, rising from 418 in May to 866 in June (+107%).

Early Years

Government has published its Best Start In Life Strategy, confirming the commitment to the national rollout of Best Start Family Hubs. The strategy links to achievement of the national target of 75% of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028.

The unvalidated Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) shows the Oldham GLD is 63.1% in 2025 compared to national at 68.3%. Outcomes for boys have improved, which was a key area of focus for this academic year, and the gap to girls has narrowed. Out of the 113 children who took part in the Making it REAL programme, 77.8% achieved the GLD, which is an improvement on the 67% GLD the previous year.

96.6% of Early Years settings are good or outstanding (94% of group providers and 100% of childminders).

Youth Service

The Youth Services Summer programme provided a comprehensive programme of positive and enriching activities for Oldham young people with over a hundred sessions delivered.

Detached youth teams have worked in town centres to reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB) and promoted water safety at known swimming spots. Outreach in Derker with Operation Vulcan is strengthening relationships between young people and professionals.

Summer HAF began in July with 39 providers delivering from 54 venues. Some of the many summer HAF activities are boxing, swimming, performing arts, climbing and outdoor pursuits. Visits undertaken have demonstrated good quality provision.

Well done to the team for receiving the Leaders Merit Award from Shaw and Crompton Town Council for outstanding community contributions.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.