



Oversight and Governance

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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 10 October 2024
2.00 pm
Warspite Room, Council House

Members:

Councillor Reilly, Chair

Councillor Wood, Vice Chair

Councillors Mrs Beer, Gilmour, Krizanac, McLay, McNamara, Simpson, Steel, Stephens and Tippetts.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf. This meeting will be webcast and available on-line after the meeting. By entering the Warspite Room, Councillors are consenting to being filmed during the meeting and to the use of the recording for the webcast.

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Tracey Lee
Chief Executive

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

1. **Apologies**

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Councillors.

2. **To note the appointment of Vice-Chair for the 2024/25 Municipal Year**

The Panel will note the appointment of Councillor Chris Wood as Vice-Chair for the 2024/25 municipal year.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect to items on the agenda.

4. **Minutes** **(Pages 1 - 10)**

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 July 2024.

5. **Chair's Urgent Business**

To receive reports on business which in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

6. **Inclusive Practice to address exclusions and suspensions in Plymouth:** **(Pages 11 - 42)**

7. **Elective Home Education in Plymouth:** **(Pages 43 - 64)**

8. **Children, Young People and Families Service Improvement Plan 2024-25: Q1 Progress and Impact Report:** **(Pages 65 - 76)**

9. **Family Homes for Plymouth Children:** **(Pages 77 - 106)**

10. **Q1 2024/25 Performance Report:** **(Pages 107 - 122)**

11. **Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023-2024:** **(Pages 123 - 170)**

12. **Early Help:** **(Pages 171 - 176)**

- 13. Youth Justice Service:** (Pages 177 - 182)
- 14. Work Programme:** (Pages 183 - 186)
- 15. Tracking Decisions:** (Pages 187 - 188)

16. Exempt Business

To consider passing a resolution under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

- 17. Confidential Minutes:** (Pages 189 - 198)

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Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 18 July 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Reilly, in the Chair.

Councillors Mrs Beer, Gilmour, Krizanac, McLay, McNamara, Simpson, Steel, Stephens, Tippetts and Wood.

Also in attendance: Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications), Councillor Cresswell, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships, David Haley (Director of Children's Services), Lisa Linscott (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), Temilola Salimon (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Amanda Paddison (Head of Access to Learning), Tina Brinkworth (Head of Skills and Post-16), Ian Taylor (Service Manager for Youth Offending) and Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 12.32 pm and finished at 3.35pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

49. **Apologies**

Councillor Rebecca Smith provided apologies, Councillor Wood substituted.

50. **To note the appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2024/25**

The Panel agreed to note the appointment of Councillor Zoe Reilly as Chair for the 2024/25 municipal year. The appointment of a Vice-Chair would be confirmed at the next meeting of Council on 16 September 2024.

51. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Zoe Reilly declared a personal interest and was employed by Young Devon.

52. **Scrutiny Panel Responsibilities**

The Panel agreed to note the responsibilities of the Children, Young People and Families Panel.

53. **Minutes**

The Panel agreed the minutes of the meeting that took place on 28 February 2024 subject to admin errors being corrected.

54. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chairs urgent business.

55. **Plymouth City Council Special Educational needs and Disabilities Sufficiency Plan 2024-2030**

Councillor Cresswell, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- a) There had been an increase in the number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- b) There had been work underway across the partnership to support children within mainstream settings without the need for an EHCP but it would take time to embed and would not replace the need for special educational provision;
- c) Following data analysis, it was forecast that the city would be short of at least 105 special school places by 2030. Due to capacity pressures within the special school estate the city has found itself in a position where its had to place children in independent special school (ISP's);
- d) There were 376 children and young people that attended 37 registered independent schools and post 16 settings, with a total cost of those placements in 2023/24 being approximately £8.6 million;
- e) Children who had requested a special school place for point of entry in September 2024 had their place confirmed and the 0-25 service had been working with families to confirm as many places as quickly as possible;
- f) Plymouth City Council was increasing its special school estate wherever possible to increase the number of places available in September. Many special schools had limited space to expand due to the nature of the sites but the Council would expand at the following sites:
 - Cann Bridge – eight additional places
 - Longcause – six additional places
 - Millford expansion within a temporary satellite provision of an additional 20 to 30 places
- g) The Local Authority had been receiving funding via the high needs provisional capital allocations grant (HNPCA). The grant should be used to increase the number of SEND places in Plymouth. Plymouth received £15 million via the

grant over a seven year period with £13 million remaining to fund expansion. All future expansion needed to be funded by the grant as there would be no additional funding available;

- h) Increase in resource provision would provide an additional 50 to 75 places across the city;
- i) Following surveys to Milford's school which was in poor condition, it was hoped that remodelling of the building could offer an additional 30 places;
- j) The Council was progressing an option to buy a building near to Longcause school which could provide an additional 100 places to Plymouth, subject to internal remodelling and refurbishment;
- k) The final option would be to build a new school, however the current HNCPA grant would not be able to cover the cost which was estimated at £26 – 35 million dependant on size and design.

In response to questions, it was further explained:

- l) There was a rising need in relation to SEM and complex special educational needs nationally which was creating a pressure within the system and mainstream settings, but also in terms of those complex needs that required specialist provision;
- m) Plymouth had a high level of requests for an EHCP accepted when compared nationally;
- n) The plan would expand the building spaces for Plymouth's children that genuinely required a special school place, but it would only work if Plymouth invested in its early and targeted help to ensure children and young people whose needs could be met in mainstream settings to be met in those places;
- o) Having an EHCP allowed children, their schools and their families to access support and funding beyond the notional £6,000 of funding that is received as an entitlement to all children;
- p) Plymouth wanted as many children as possible within mainstream schools and mainstream settings to keep them with their communities;
- q) Plymouth had a high percentage of children with identified social, emotional, mental health needs when compared nationally. A deep dive was underway to understand the SEMH need. Additionally work was underway with schools in Plymouth to focus on early language acquisition in 2025 to work with family hubs, nursery and primary school provisions;
- r) Family hubs in the city had been working with libraries on language acquisition, which Plymouth wanted to grow;
- s) The Plymstock Dunstone site was kept should funding become available to

build a new school. The trust that occupied the building, stripped the building when they left which left the shell of the building only. Under the building regulations, the Council wouldn't be able to adapt further and would need to be demolished before it could meet the needs of those children requiring a special school;

- t) The listing of the proposed building purchase next to Longcause school was not a barrier to providing that provision for Plymouth;
- u) Plymouth would see an assessment nursery which may lead to EHCP's being allocated to children at any earlier stage more than before;
- v) The SEMH deep dive would be undertaken and presented to the SEND Strategic Board in October;
- w) Feedback from schools in relation to the resourced provision was positive around the direction of travel. There was a significant number of schools that attended the first meeting trying to identify schools in the city that were interested in the resourced provision, including secondary schools. The Council made it clear that there needed to be a matching secondary school for every primary school within resourced provision. Schools wanted assurance that it would be well funded and liked that it would be locality based so children could go to their local school rather than travelling across the city;
- x) The COVID-19 pandemic had impacted early years children significantly due to the isolation many families had faced and the lack of modelling;
- y) CAMHS waiting times in Plymouth was strong when compared nationally and in the top quartile. Health waiting times was a key part of the SEND Improvement work and one in which was integrated in the improvement plans;
- z) Work had been undertaken with Health colleagues around what waiting well looked like. Children and young people provided their feedback around their experience of waiting well and what they felt needed to improve;
- aa) The Council did provide bus passes which had clear criteria and was an online application process;
- bb) The Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement would expand due to the expansion of the FSM programme;
- cc) The Council helped parents/carers in the application process and did refer them to the Plymouth Information Advice and Support for SEND (PIASS) service;
- dd) The admissions process for Plymouth SEND children and young people;
- ee) The Council had statutory powers to direct schools to take children and was used as a last resort;

ff) The Council's independent travel programme.

Action: EHCP and CAMHS waiting times would be provided to Councillor McLay;

Action: Councillors would be provided the policy on Free School Meals and Bus Pass entitlements.

The Panel agreed to:

To endorse the proposed options for expansion of special educational provision within Plymouth to meet increasing demand.

56. **Seeking Education, Employment and Training July 2024**

Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) introduced the report with Tina Brinkworth (Head of Skills and Post 16) and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The number of young people not in education employment or training continued to decrease;
- b) The council actively engaged young people to seek education, employment or training (SEET) and secured £1.3 million of funding through the SEND Innovation grant;
- c) Programmes were delivering the impact required with 88.1% of SEND young people in education, employment or training. The next academic year would see an aspirational target of 92%;

(The Panel were shown a video highlighting the work of SEET programmes)

In response to questions, it was further explained:

- d) The service continually applied for and sought funding due to being fully grant funded and the SEET programme was in the process of becoming built-in within the adult education budget;
- e) The SEET programme was an investment to young people and was backed by a number of key council priorities for Plymouth;

The Panel agreed to note the report.

57. **Q4 2023/24 Performance Report**

Paul Stephens (Performance Advisor) and Susan London (Performance Advisor) outlined the report to the Board and in response to questions, it was explained:

- a) There were nine children/young people in unregistered or unregulated placements and were placed in those provisions after exhausting all other options available to the council;

- b) A number of placements registered with CQC and the council was working with them to dual register with Ofsted;
- c) Unregistered placements were monitored regularly with weekly reports to Ofsted;
- d) The Early Help strategy would reduce the number of referrals for children's services. Practice had improved since 2022/23;
- e) The council ran an extensive partnership programme in October 2023 with 800 professionals in the city on the threshold document and Plymouth was beginning to see the benefits.

In response to questions, it was further explained:

- f) The plan for 24/25 academic year would be to provide outcomes data, broken down into cohorts and then made consistent throughout key stage groups;
- g) Most absences in the city were due to sickness, but it was acknowledged some absences may have been due to parents/carers taking children on holiday;
- h) Child Protections Plans were decreasing due to the Plans progressing and stepping down to Child in Need following good work;
- i) Plymouth tracked data to project required school capacity into the future;
- j) Higher numbers of sexual abuse child protection plans were due to increased training for the workforce;
- k) Increases in repeat child protection plans were due to the greater complexities of families the service was working with. Increased training was taking place across services to ensure plans were appropriate in order to prevent multiple interventions;
- l) The item scheduled for 10 October on suspensions and exclusions would provide more granular data on the patterns of suspensions and exclusions in Plymouth schools.

Action: Projection of school numbers and capacity would be added to the work programme

The Panel agreed to note the report.

58. **Achieving Excellence - A Strategy for Children's Services 2024 - 27**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) supported by Temilola Salimon (Service Director for

Children, Young People and Families), Lisa Linscott (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) introduced the item and highlighted the following key points:

- a) Since the Improvement Notice issued to the Council, Plymouth had worked hard to rectify and improve practice, which culminated in a requires improvement grading from Ofsted in January 2024;
- b) The report set out a vision from the council which would ensure children and families in Plymouth received the help they required, when they needed it with a timely and high quality assessment;
- c) The Plan would hold officers and cabinet members to account in achieving excellence for Children's services;
- d) There were ten strategic priorities underpinning improvement work for the service.

In response to questions, it was further explained:

- e) Plymouth's data on young people not in education, employment or training continued to get better which had seen the service able to respond appropriately to that cohort and was evidenced through tracked data;
- f) Since the Ofsted Monitoring visit in 2022, Plymouth set up a Improvement Board which met every six weeks to review the improvement work with the support of Dorset County Council as Sector Led Improvement Partners (SLIP);
- g) The largest risk in the delivery of the plan was workforce and Plymouth had a challenge in attracting children's social workers. A new recruitment and retention strategy was in place with further reviews into how Plymouth recruited in order to ensure Plymouth was an attractive place to live and work;
- h) There was a stable senior leadership team but a quarter of social workers were agency social workers;
- i) The council was expecting a monitoring visit from Ofsted in relation to Local Area SEND. There was also an improvement Board for this area with SLIP in place;

The Panel agreed to:

1. Endorse the Children's Services Strategic Plan, Achieving Excellence and;
2. Endorse the proposed milestones for the delivery of the ten Strategic Priorities and implemented in Children's Services as set out in the attached three-year milestones.

59. **Child Exploitation Update**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) and Ian Taylor (Service Manager for Youth Offending) presented the report to the Board and highlighted the following key points:

- a) Plymouth had implemented a contextual safeguarding approach through the Adolescent Safety Framework (ASF) which had been worked on to simplify to ensure practitioners across the City recognised behaviours and indicators to ensure a response at the earliest opportunity;
- b) A recent Ofsted inspection highlighted how the council was doing everything possible to support children;
- c) *Ofsted noted the following in their report from January 2024: 'The response to children who go missing and children at risk of extra-familial harm is coordinated effectively across the whole service and is helping to reduce harm. Persistent interventions from the specialist team for children who go missing, youth workers and the edge of care team are providing a strong and consistent response for children. Most children who go missing benefit from timely return home interviews that capture their experiences well. Information about wider harm relating to exploitation, gangs and substance misuse is well considered and updated through strong 'safer me' assessments. If children are missing for more than 24 hours, multi-agency child protection strategy meetings take place to ensure a joint response to help to find children and reduce risks for them. Plymouth received recognition for its daily intelligence briefings and had other Local Authorities come and observe them';*
- d) The Be Safe team were working with children and young people earlier, to develop relationships which would then see a reduction in the numbers of young people going missing in the city;

In response to questions, it was further explained:

- e) Daily intelligence briefings were attended by the Police, MASH, Health, NSPCC, Barnardo's;
- f) Every child/young person heard at the daily intelligence briefings would have a plan in place;
- g) Devon and Cornwall Child Exploitation group met monthly to discuss themes in the region. The theme present was more girls going missing in the region and the group was working together in order to address;
- h) The team expanded from three to nine. Four youth workers were employed to work and build relationships with those children and young people that went missing regularly;
- i) The Be Safe team had been brought into the Youth Justice team who had access to CAMHS and a psychologist outside of the normal pathways;

- j) There was a significant drop in the number of repeat missing episodes;
- k) The Frederick Street Youth Centre was kept open on Thursday evenings and young people were made aware of its availability if they required help;
- l) There was a spike in May of children and young people going missing due to warm weather and it was a common theme;

Action: All councillors would be invited to a briefing session on Child Exploitation and County Lines.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

60. **Tracking Decisions**

Action 1 – The Council would write to MAT's to see how they were working towards the Plymouth Plan in driving towards a consistency across all schools and other area's in regards to SEMH;

Lisa Linscott (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) provided the following update: A deep dive was being completed on social emotional and mental health and the findings would be reported into the SEND Strategic Engagement Board with clear actions working with Plymouth schools in relation to identification and potential mis-identification of SEMH needs;

The Board agreed to note the action log and progress.

61. **Work Programme**

The Panel added the following item to the work programme:

- Projection of school numbers and capacity would be added to the work programme

62. **Exempt Business**

The Panel agreed to pass resolution under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

63. **Plymouth City Council Special Educational needs and Disabilities Sufficiency Plan 2024-2030**

(Please note that there is a confidential minute to this item)

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Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	Exclusion and suspensions deep dive
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Isabelle Kolinsky
Contact Email:	Isabelle.kolinsky@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Exclusions and Suspensions Deep Dive
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel with detailed information around Plymouth's numbers of suspensions and permanent exclusions. The report provides an overview of a deep dive undertaken with significant levels of data and trends in Plymouth and how the council and schools in Plymouth are tackling the large numbers of children within those cohorts.

Recommendations and Reasons

- I. For the Children, Young People and Families Panel to note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- I. N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The ambition of Plymouth's 'Bright Future' plan is for all our children to live full and happy lives. The plan recognises the importance of the local area partnership working together to ensure that children are supported by a system which works seamlessly to spot difficulties early, responds quickly and effectively, and makes sure that help is there for as long as it is needed. The learning from this paper is being used across the local area partnership to plan and deliver collaborative, evidenced based approaches and support our collective ambition for children

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

N/A

Financial Risks

N/A

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

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Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	Click here to enter text.	Leg	Click here to enter text.	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Assets	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Lisa Linscott, Service Director for EPS											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 01/10/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Cresswell approved via email											
Date approved: 27/09/2024											

Exclusions and Suspensions Deep Dive

Date: 02nd October 2024

From: Isabelle Kolinsky



1.0. Introduction

- 1.1. The numbers of children being permanently excluded or suspended from schools in Plymouth has increased. The most vulnerable children are overrepresented within the data set. Evidence suggests that excluded children have poorer outcomes and that exclusions have a detrimental effect on their life chances. It places children at a higher risk of becoming not engaged in education, employment or training post 16 and/or a victim or perpetrator of crime.
- 1.2. The ambition of Plymouth's 'Bright Future' plan is for all our children to live full and happy lives. The plan recognises the importance of the local area partnership working together to ensure that children are supported by a system which works seamlessly to spot difficulties early, responds quickly and effectively, and makes sure that help is there for as long as it is needed.
- 1.3. The learning from this paper is being used across the local area partnership to plan and deliver collaborative, evidenced based approaches, which prevent exclusion and support our collective ambition for children.

2.0. Permanent exclusions and suspensions

- 2.1. There has been a significant rise in the rate of permanent exclusion and suspensions across schools in Plymouth. In academic year 2022/23 the rate of permanent exclusion in Plymouth was 0.22%; this was higher than the regional (0.13%) and national (0.11%) benchmarks. In academic year 2023/24 the rate of permanent exclusion in Plymouth increased to 0.3% (appendix 1). The increasing trend is reflected nationally however, permanent exclusions in Plymouth are rising at a faster rate than national and regional benchmarks.
- 2.2. In academic year 2022/23 the rate of suspensions in Plymouth was 13.2%, this was higher than regional (11.7%) and national (9.3%) benchmarks. In academic year 2023/24 the rate of suspension in Plymouth increased to 18.7% (appendix 2). Whilst the increasing trend is reflected nationally; suspensions in Plymouth are rising at a faster rate than national and regional benchmarks.

3.0. Permanent exclusion and suspensions in Plymouth

- 3.1. In the academic year 2023/24, 114 children were permanently excluded from Plymouth schools. This is an increase of 26.31% (30) from 2022/23; and 47.36% (53) in 2021/22 (appendix 3). In 2019-2020 and 2020/21 there was a reduction in the rate of permanent exclusion which was reflected nationally in response to the pandemic. Following the pandemic, the rates of permanent exclusion in Plymouth have risen significantly year on year.

- 3.2.** In the academic year 2023/24, 1998 children received one or more suspension. This is an increase of 9.96% (185) when compared to 2022/23; and 21.52% (430) in 2021/22. Whilst the rate of the number of children being suspended has started to fall, the number of suspensions being issued has increased significantly; this means that suspensions are being used as a sanction more frequently. In 2023/24 there were 7285 suspensions in Plymouth (Appendix 4); this accounted for 11300.5 days of lost learning which impacts on rates of attendance in school.
- 3.3.** Plymouth City Council is leading schools to develop inclusive practice and approaches to create the conditions for success and inclusion in schools. This is being achieved through a combination of System Change Projects which include priority 3 of the SEND Improvement Strategy, the Place Based Working Group and Plymouth City Council system leadership projects. Priority area 3 of the SEND Improvement Strategy is focused on eliminating permanent exclusions for children with an Education, Health and Care plan and Strand 1 of the 'place-based' plan focuses on developing a 'belonging framework' so that parents and children feel an increasing sense of being welcome and included in their school communities.
- 4.0. What we are doing well**
- 4.1.** We are confident that our arrangements for the oversight and monitoring of education for permanently excluded children is effective.
- 4.2.** We are confident in our commissioning arrangements and ensure that children receive an education from day 6 of their permanent exclusion. Any child placed in unregistered provision is assigned a local authority caseworker who is the named point of contact for the child, family and professional team. The caseworker is assigned until the child is on the roll and attending a registered school. Risk management measures are in place to ensure oversight from the Director of Education and Director of Children's Services.
- 4.3.** We have embedded arrangements for supporting children who have been permanently excluded to return to school as quickly as possible. The Fair Access Panel meets on a monthly basis, all permanently excluded children are allocated a school place to set the medium to long term plan for the child. This plan is developed in partnership with the child and their family.
- 4.4.** All parents of permanently excluded children are supported to complete an in-year application for a new mainstream school. This supports the medium to long term trajectory and plan for the child. Any permanently excluded child who does not need an interim alternative provision is placed at a new mainstream school from day six of their permanent exclusion.
- 4.5.** When the LA are informed that a child has been permanently excluded or that a school is considering a permanent exclusion, the head teacher is contacted to discuss the decision. In 2023/24 this resulted in the prevention of 43 permanent exclusions.

- 4.6.** If a child has an Education Health and Care Plan, the 0-25 SEND Team are notified of the permanent exclusion. The 0-25 SEND Team work with the school and the family to try and avoid a permanent exclusion and to secure appropriate provision for the child.
- 4.7.** Since the introduction of a new escalation procedure for primary children who are permanently excluded; all permanent exclusions have been withdrawn by the Headteacher. Plymouth City Council has worked with the school and the family to find an alternative placement.
- 4.8.** Monthly performance and practice meetings ensure robust oversight and reporting to Directors and Heads of Service against Key Performance Indicators. This informs strategic planning and the development of practice standards across Children's Services.
- 4.9.** Monthly risk management has been introduced to enable the Director of Children's Service to have oversight of any permanently excluded child who is without suitable day 6 provision.
- 4.10.** Weekly meetings are held with ACE Schol Plymouth to ensure that day 6 admission arrangements have been made for each permanently excluded child. Children are tracked and monitored in partnership with ACE to ensure that there is a clear forward plan for each child.
- 4.11.** All schools are encouraged to contact the LA should they believe a child is at risk of permanent exclusion. Daily triage meetings take place with schools to support them to explore all avenues to ensure that any permanent exclusion is avoided. Whenever a triage meeting concerns a child with specific vulnerabilities, information is shared with the professional team around the child to ensure the right support, at the right time. Last year 43 permanent exclusions were prevented by working in this way.
- 5.0. Pupil characteristics**
- 5.1.** 114 children were permanently excluded from Plymouth schools in 2023/24. The permanently excluded cohort is split at 68.42% (78) male and 31.58% (36) female (appendix 3). 1998 children were suspended from a Plymouth school in 2023/24. Of the cohort 756 (37.84%) were female. 1242 (62.16%) were male (appendix 4).
- 5.1.1.** The top three reasons for females to be permanently excluded were:
- Persistent disruptive behaviour (11)
 - Physical assault against a child or adult (10)
 - Drugs and alcohol related (less than 10)
- 5.1.2.** The top three reasons for males to be permanently excluded were:
- Physical assault against child or adult (25)
 - Persistent disruptive behaviour (23)
 - Drug and alcohol related (11)
 - Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (11)
- 5.2.** Of the 114 children who were permanently excluded:
- 59 (51.75%) were eligible for Free School Meals.

- 59 (51.75%) were eligible for Pupil Premium.
- 56 (49.12%) have received one or more suspensions.
- 24 (21.05%) attended more than two secondary schools.
- 20 (17.54%) attended more than two primary schools.
- 45 (39.47%) had one or more episodes of part time timetable.
- 23 (20.18%) had one or more episodes of elective home education.
- 13 (11.40%) had one or more Child Missing Education episode.
- 56 (49.12%) require SEN Support.
- Less than 10 have an Education health and Care Plan.
- 93 (81.58%) were known to Children Social Care in the last 6 years.
- 68 (59.65%) have had more than one episode of Child In Need.
- 14 (12.28%) are currently on a Child Protection Plan.
- 11 (9.65%) have had more than one episode of Child Protection.
- Less than 10 are currently on a Child in Need Plan.
- 62 (54.39%) were persistently absent from school.
- 25 (21.93%) were severely absent from school.

5.3. Of the 1998 children who received a suspension:

- 995 (49.8%) were eligible for Pupil Premium.
- 994 (49.75%) were eligible for Free School Meals.
- 1432 (71.67%) have received more than one suspension.
- 1148 (57.46%) were persistently absent from school.
- 299 (14.96%) were severely absent from school.
- 71 (3.55%) had one or more Child Missing Education episode.
- 780 (39.04%) have been registered at more than one primary school.
- 516 (25.83%) have been registered at more than one secondary school.
- 382 (19.12%) had one or more episodes of part time timetable.
- 191 (9.56%) had one or more episodes of elective home education.
- 790 (39.54%) SEN Support
- 237 (11.86%) have an Education Health and Care Plan.
- 1104 (55.25%) were known to Children Social Care in the last 6 years.
- 1076 (53.85%) have had more than one episode of Child In Need.
- 358 (17.92%) have had more than one episode of Child Protection.
- 89 (4.45%) are currently on a Child in Need Plan.
- 57 (2.85%) are currently on a Child Protection Plan.

6.0. Ethnicity

- 6.1.** 99 (85.96%) of permanently excluded children identify as white British or white English. Based on the current data set there are no emerging themes in respect of Black and Minority Ethnic cohort.
- 6.2.** 1738 (86.99%) of the children suspended from school identify as white British or white English. Based on the current data set there are no emerging themes in respect of the Black and Minority Ethnic cohort.

7.0. Permanent exclusion and suspensions by year group

- 7.1.** In Plymouth, children who are suspended or permanently excluded from school are likely to have special educational needs and/or a disability; have been known to Children's Social Care; live in a neighbourhood or locality with high levels of deprivation and had multiple suspensions.
- 7.2.** In 2023/24 the highest rates of permanent exclusions from primary schools were in years one, two and four (three permanent exclusions across each of the year groups) (Appendix 5). Children from black and minority ethnic groups are overrepresented within the data set and represent three (21.23%) of the primary aged children who were permanently excluded. Physical violence is named as the reason for the permanent exclusion in 8 (57.14%) of the cases.
- 7.2.1.** Of the 14 primary aged children who were permanently excluded:
- Less than 10 are from a Black and Minority Ethnic Group.
 - 10 (71.43%) are eligible for Pupil Premium.
 - 10 (71.43%) are eligible for Free School Meals.

 - Eight (57.14%) live in the north locality.

 - 12 (85.71%) had two or more suspensions.
 - Less than 10 were permanently excluded for physical assault against an adult.
 - Less than 10 were permanently excluded for persistent disruptive behaviour.
 - Less than 10 were permanently excluded for physical assault against a pupil.
 - Less than 10 were permanently excluded for verbal abuse/threatening an adult.

 - Less than 10 had been on a reduced timetable.

 - Ten (71.43%) require Special Educational Needs Support.
 - Less than 10 have an Education Health and Care Plan.

 - 11 (78.56%) were known to Children's Social Care in the last six years.
 - Less than 10 have had two or more episodes of child in need.
 - Less than 10 are currently on a child protection plan (sexual abuse).
 - Less than 10 are currently on a child in need plan.
 - Less than 10 have had two episodes of child protection.

7.3. In 2023/24 the highest rates of suspension from primary school were in Key Stage 2 (appendix 6) where the likelihood of a child being suspended increased year on year.

7.3.1. Of the 296 children who were suspended from a Plymouth primary school:

- 118 (39.86%) live in the west locality.
- 78 (26.35%) live in the north locality.
- 26 (8.78%) live in the east locality.
- 56 (18.92%) live in the south locality.

- 180 (60.81%) are eligible for pupil premium.
- 178 (60.14%) are eligible for free school meals.

- 190 (64.19%) have been suspended twice or more.
- 129 (43.53%) have been on a part time timetable.

- 162 (54.73%) require Special Educational Needs support.
- 86 (29.05%) have an Education Health and Care Plan.

- 150 (50.68%) have been known to Children's Social Care within the last 6 years.
- 124 (41.89%) have had two or more episodes of child in need.
- 20 (6.76%) have had two or more episodes of child protection.
- 20 (6.76%) are currently on a child in need plan.
- 14 (4.73%) children are currently on a child protection plan.

7.4. Plymouth City Council has developed robust procedures to prevent primary permanent exclusions. The Director for Education and Director of Children's Services are notified using a 'Need to Know' escalation procedure. Since its implementation in the summer term 2024 there have been no primary permanent exclusions.

7.5. Strand 4 of the 'place-based' plan for the 2024/25 academic year is the development of an early language acquisition project across the city. The aim of this work, based in the primary phase, will be to support children with social, emotional and mental health needs to develop their communication skills. The intended outcome will be a reduction in the number of children at risk of permanent exclusion, subject to part-time timetables and suspension as a result of improving children's ability to understand and communicate their feelings to key adults.

7.6. Once children leave primary school and transition into year 7 the likelihood of a child being permanently excluded increases significantly. The risk continues to increase as children move through the year groups at secondary school and peaks in year 10 (appendix 5). In 2023/24 the highest rates of permanent exclusions from secondary schools were in years 8 (22), 9 (25) and 10 (30). Of the secondary aged cohort of children who were permanently excluded in 2023/24 the top three reasons for permanent exclusions were persistent disruptive behaviour (30), drug and alcohol related (19) and physical assault against a pupil (16).

7.6.1. Of the 100 children who were permanently excluded from secondary school:

- 39 (39%) live in the west locality.
- 31 (31%) live in the north locality.
- Eight (8%) live in the east locality.
- 15 (15%) live in the south locality.

- 49 (49%) are eligible for the Pupil Premium.
- 49 (49%) are eligible for Free School Meals.
- Less than 10 were from a Black or Minority Ethnic group.

- 24 (24%) have attended three or more secondary schools.
- 16 (16%) have attended more three or more primary schools.

- 81 (81%) have had two or more suspensions.
- Less than 10 have been permanently excluded twice.

- 23 (23%) have had one or more episode of elective home education.
- 31 (31%) have had one or more episode of part time timetable.

- Less than 10 have an Education Health and Care Plan
- 46 (46%) require Special Educational Needs support.

- 82 (82%) have been known to Children's Social Care within the last 6 years.
- 62 (62%) have had two or more episodes of child in need.
- 10 (10%) have had two or more episodes of child protection.
- Less than 10 children are currently on a child in need plan.
- 13 (13%) children are currently on a child protection plan.
- Less than 10 children were previously a child in care.
- Less than 10 children are currently recorded as being a child in care.

7.7. In addition to the risk of permanent exclusion, the risk of suspension increases significantly when a child transitions into year 7. In 2023/24 the highest rates of suspension from secondary schools were in years 8 (340), 9 (412) and 10 (410) (Appendix 6). Of the 1702 secondary aged children who were suspended in 2023/24:

- 566 (33.25%) live in the west locality.
- 466 (27.38%) live in the north locality.
- 256 (15.04%) live in the east locality.
- 289 (16.98%) live in the south locality.

- 775 (45.53%) are eligible for the Pupil Premium.
- 766 (45.01%) are eligible for Free School Meals.
- 74 (4.35%) were from a Black or Minority Ethnic group.

- 216 (12.69%) have attended more three or more primary schools.
- 114 (6.70%) have attended three or more secondary schools.

- 184 (10.81%) have had one or more episode of elective home education.
- 253 (14.86%) have had one or more episode of part time timetable.
- 1242 (72.97%) have had two or more suspensions.

- 628 (36.9%) require Special Educational Needs support.
- 151 (8.87%) have an Education Health and Care Plan

- 954 (56.05%) have been known to Children's Social Care within the last 6 years.
- 710 (41.72%) have had two or more episodes of child in need.
- 107 (6.29%) have had two or more episodes of child protection.
- 69 (4.05%) children are currently on a child in need plan.
- 13 (0.76 %) children are currently on a child protection plan.

7.8. The Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) resource has been co-produced with families and partners across education, health and social care. It includes information and resources to support schools in their work with a specific chapter on collaborating with families. The resource clearly identifies what schools must do support all children and young people. The universal provision described in the OAP is the offer created by schools to ensure they are inclusive by design and consistently work to reduce as many barriers as possible. This clearly allows schools and professionals to then identify where a child is making progress with a consistent universal offer and where extra targeted provision will need be given in a mainstream environment. Evaluation taken from the OAP launch in June 2024 saw 83% of attendees agreeing that the resource will have a positive impact on their inclusive approaches. The remaining 18% agreed maybe, with some time to digest the information available. The impact of the OAP will be evaluated through applications for targeted funding; feedback from the educational psychology services and specialist teachers via their termly consultations; parent surveys and the reduction of numbers of children being suspended and permanently excluded.

7.9. The Education Psychology Service has started a pilot project to prevent exclusions. The pilot will launch in the Autumn Term 2024. The impact of the pilot will be evaluated, and the learning rolled out to schools in the city.

7.10. A new Vulnerable Pupils Panel has been set up with schools and multi-agency partners across the local area. The panel is based on learning and best practice from Sutton Borough Council. The panel is a partnership between education, health, police and Children's Social Care, providing early help and prevention to support children, removing barriers to their access and engagement with education. The panel will feed into the strategic review of alternative provision and report to the Plymouth Education Board.

- 7.11.** Termly training for multi-agency professionals is being rolled in November 2024 to support professional development across the local area. The training will raise the profile of the suspensions and exclusions. The purpose of the training is to promote early help and intervention from multi-agency partners so that preventing exclusions becomes everyone's business.
- 7.12.** Schools are increasingly inviting the School's Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead to their Governor Discipline Committee. The Schools Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead has identified a training need for governing bodies to enable them to undertake their duties effectively and provide the right level of scrutiny to a headteacher's exclusion decisions. Training started in September 2024.
- 7.13.** An internal review is being undertaken to consider the impact of inclusion in relation to reducing suspensions and exclusions. The review will make recommendations for improvement, supporting service improvements.
- 8.0. Children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)**
- 8.1.** Of the cohort of children in the city who were permanently excluded, less than 10 have an EHCP. Of the EHCP cohort, less than 10 were male. A number of the children received five or more suspensions prior to being permanently excluded. Less than 10 of the children have had one or more episodes of Child in Need; Less than 10 children have had one or more episodes of Child Protection.
- 8.2.** Of the secondary aged children with EHCPs who were permanently excluded from mainstream secondary schools, 60% were excluded from the same school.
- 8.3.** In every case of a primary aged child (with or without an EHCP) who is permanently excluded, the Director of Children's Services and Director for Education is notified, and information shared with action taken to prevent the permanent exclusion. A decision is then made regarding next steps to prevent permanent exclusion. Since its implementation there have been no primary aged children permanently excluded.
- 8.4.** In every case of a child with an EHCP being permanently excluded the 0-25 SEND Team action as casework and work with the school to prevent the permanent exclusion. The 0-25 SEND Team are recruiting an Officer to attend termly meetings with secondary schools to discuss children with EHCP's who are causing a concern. This will improve early identification and access to early help for children at risk of permanent exclusion.
- 9.0 Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support**
- 9.1.** The Local Area SEND Inspection Report reflects the concern that too many children in school either do not have their needs identified or met in schools. This reflects the trend that we see with regards to children on SEN Support being permanently excluded or suspended. 237 (11.86%) of the children who were suspended in 2023/24 have an EHCP; 790 (39.54%) require SEN Support. 56 (49.12%) of the children who were permanently excluded require SEN Support in school.

- 9.2.** In undertaking this deep dive exercise, it has not been possible to conduct an analysis of SEN area of need. Action to improve rapid data access through the strategic review of CAPITA will support our proactive approach to preventing exclusions.
- 9.3.** The Graduated Approach to Inclusion Framework supports teachers and school leaders in identifying, assessing, and recording the needs of children and young people requiring additional or special educational provision. The framework is designed to support the identification, planning, and recording of appropriate support and provides guidance to help review progress for children with special educational needs.

10.0. Reasons for permanent exclusion and suspension

- 10.1.** Persistent disruptive behaviour remains the prevalent reason for permanent exclusion (appendix 7). This is reflected nationally and locally. Over the last three academic years combined citywide data (which includes special primary and mainstream schools) has consistently identified the following as the city's top three reasons for exclusion and suspensions:
- Persistent disruptive behaviour
 - Verbal abuse/threatening an adult
 - Physical assault against a pupil.
- 10.2.** Exclusions and suspensions are recorded against reason codes which are set by the Department for Education. The Serious Violence Duty places a duty on councils and local services to work together to share information and target interventions to prevent and reduce serious violence. In undertaking our duty, analysis of exclusions and suspensions for violence identify a rise in the numbers of exclusions and suspensions for behaviour which is related to violence. These include physical assault against a pupil, physical assault against an adult and use of or threat of an offensive weapon/prohibited item (appendix 8). There has been a 9.5% increase in exclusions and suspensions for physical assaults against pupils since 2021/22, a 49.09% increase for behaviour relating to a physical assault against an adult and 114.66% increase in exclusions and suspensions for the use of or threat of a weapon/prohibited item.
- 10.3.** In response to the increase in violent behaviour in schools a Practice Learning event is being held with schools and multi-agency partners in November 2024. The event is a collaboration with the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The learning from the thematic learning from the event will be shared with across the partnership and will inform the development of citywide practice.
- 10.4.** In academic year 2023/24 there was a 99.11% (156) rise in exclusions and suspensions for drug and alcohol related behaviour (appendix 9). Headteachers identified the Vaping of Substances controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act (VScMDA) as an area of growing concern within their schools and a key driver for exclusions and suspensions. This was actioned as a key line of enquiry by the Schools Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead in partnership with the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

- 10.5.** The Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Team began to collect the data specifically relating to VScMDA on 1st December 2023. Between that date and the end of the academic year 15 children were permanently excluded between for VScMDA. Of the 15 children, two children were reinstated by the governing body of the school and one permanent exclusion was rescinded. This means that there were 12 permanent exclusions specifically for drug and alcohol related activity, including VScMDA between 1st December 2023 and the end of the academic year 2024.
- 10.6.** Following the rise in permanent exclusions and suspensions for vaping and supplying illegal substances in schools, Plymouth City Council Public Health (PCCPH), has created an offer for schools to prevent the permanent exclusion of pupils engaging in the vaping of illegal substances. The approach includes universal, targeted and specialist support for children ranging from whole school assemblies and group work, more specialist 1:1 support through SHARP. Schools have been receptive to this offer and are increasingly reporting pupils' engagement with the package.
- 10.7.** Whilst it is too early to quantify the number of permanent exclusions that have been avoided by using this package, the uptake of this service is increasing. Since the implementation of the project in April 2024 there have been no permanent exclusions for VScMDA as the reason.
- 11.0. Numbers of suspensions**
- 11.1.** Trend analysis shows significant increases in the numbers of children receiving three or more suspensions (Appendix 10). In 2023/24 1168 children were identified as having received three or more suspensions throughout their time in education. This represents an increase of 60.44% or 560 children when compared to the previous academic year. In 2023/24 there was a high prevalence of children who had received more than ten suspensions during their statutory education with one child having received 71 suspensions (Appendix 11).
- 11.2.** Of the 1168 children with three or more suspensions in 2023/24, 296 were in the primary phase of education and 1699 in the secondary phase (appendix 12). The trend analysis shows that the number of children in year 7 with three or more suspensions jumped by 175 (265%) when compared to children in year 6. The numbers of children with three or more suspensions continues to increase throughout secondary school.
- 11.3.** Of the 296 primary aged children with three or more suspensions:
- 71 (23.98%) require SEN Support.
 - 58 (19.59%) have an EHCP.

 - 77 (26.01%) were known to Children's Social Care in the previous six-year period.
 - 77 (26.01%) have had one or more episodes of Child in Need.
 - 37 (12.5%) have had one or more episodes of Child Protection.
 - 13 (4.39%) are currently on a Child in Need Plan.
 - Less than 10 are currently on a Child Protection Plan.

- 11.4.** Of the primary aged cohort with three or more suspensions in 2023/24, 66 (22.29%) were in year 6. Urgent action is being taken to contact their new secondary schools in order to coordinate Team Around the Child/School meetings in order to provide early help and prevent the increased risk of suspension and permanent exclusion.
- 11.5.** Of the 1026 secondary aged children with three or more suspensions:
- 435 (42.39%) require SEN Support.
 - 128 (12.47%) have an EHCP.
 - 682 (66.47%) were known to Children's Social Care in the previous six-years.
 - 663 (64.61%) have had one or more episodes of Child in Need.
 - 224 (21.83%) have had one or more episodes of Child Protection.
 - 56 (5.45%) are currently on a Child in Need Plan.
 - 35 (3.41%) are currently on a Child Protection Plan.
- 11.6.** The secondary trend clearly shows that not only does the risk of children being suspended increase in secondary schools so do the risks in respect of safeguarding and child protection. The Place Based Working Group has implemented and continue to develop a citywide approach to share information and improve support for children at key transition points through the early years into primary and primary into secondary transition portals. All schools have engaged with this process meaning that many more children have their needs identified at entry to primary or secondary school
- 11.7.** The 50 children with the highest rates of suspension come from 8 schools within the city. Each of the schools have been contacted by the Schools Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead to ensure that there are robust plans of support in place to further suspensions and reduce the risk of a permanent exclusion.
- 11.8.** The Head of Service for SEND and the Education Psychology Service have been notified of all children with an EHCP, who are in need of SEN support and who have three or more suspensions. This will inform planning consultation meetings across the Autumn Term and casework by the 0-25 SEND Team. Providing early help and support for the cohort of children in order to prevent further escalation.
- 11.9.** Strand 4 of the place-based plan for the 2024/25 academic year is the development of a Pre-16 Vocational Offer to support children in secondary schools to be able to access provision which matches and meets their needs and aspirations. This offer will mean that a greater number of children at Key Stage 4 will be able to spend part of their week at school studying core subjects and part of their week at City College Plymouth undertaking a vocational route.
- 11.10.** The Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood Task and Finish Group is developing support for children who are moving into post 16. The purpose is to reduce the numbers of vulnerable children not in education, employment or training.

- 11.11. The prevalence of special education needs and disabilities within the excluded and suspended cohort of children has been prioritised by the Inclusion Steering Group of the SEND Strategic Board. Case studies of children with EHCPs who have been permanently excluded have been shared with the group and will inform planning and action to improve inclusion and outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 11.12. In partnership with families and schools, a reducing exclusions toolkit is being developed by the Schools Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead and will be rolled out in the Autumn Term 2024.

12.0. Permanent exclusions by school and multi-academy trust

- 12.1. There are a number of schools in Plymouth who are overrepresented in the rates of children permanently excluded. These schools also have high suspension and pupil mobility rates.
- 12.2. Despite there being schools in the city with disproportionately high numbers and rates of permanent exclusion, if we use the 2022/23 national and regional benchmark of 0.4%, 12 of 19 secondary schools in Plymouth sit above the baseline and are cause for concern.
- 12.3. Of the 11 multi-academy trusts in the city, some are overrepresented with disproportionately high numbers and rates of permanent exclusion sitting above the regional and national comparators.
- 12.4. Plymouth City Council's Headteacher briefing in March 2024 shared the permanent exclusion data with school leaders. As a result, more schools are working with the local authority in respect of children who are at significant risk of permanent exclusion. This collaborative approach has resulted in the prevention of approximately 25 primary permanent exclusions and 18 permanent exclusions in the secondary phase.
- 12.5. The Director for Education holds Inclusion Meetings with multi academy trusts to identify and analyse strengths and areas for improvement. This informs the strategic planning of inclusive approaches and best practice across the city.
- 12.6. Strand 1 of the place-based plan for the 2024/25 academic year is the development of a 'Belonging Framework' to shape further the way that schools and partners work meaningfully with children and their families to embed a sense of being welcome and part of the school community.
- 12.7. Plymouth City Council has collaborated with special schools within the city to develop an outreach offer of support for mainstream schools. This was launched in September 2024, the outreach offer provides specialist advice and support to professionals in mainstream schools so that they can be equipped to meet the needs of complex children and/or cohorts within their school.

13.0. Permanent exclusion by neighbourhood and locality

- 13.1.** The correlation between deprivation, permanent exclusions and suspensions is strong with the majority of children from localities and neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation (Appendix 13, and 14).
- 13.2.** Each school has an allocated Access and Attendance Officer and an Early Help Link Officer. Access and Attendance Officers are working in small teams across each locality, contacting schools on a fortnightly basis to discuss any child who is at risk of being persistently absent, severely absent or missing out on education, this includes children at risk of exclusion. In addition, termly meetings are being held jointly between Early Help and Attendance Support Teams, the 0-25 SEND Team will join the meetings at secondary schools. Working across education and Children's Social Care will ensure effective joint planning and support for individual children.

14.0. Next steps

- 14.1.** Case studies in respect of children permanently excluded for violence and those with an Education Health and Care Plan are being presented to the multi-agency Inclusion Steering Group of the Special Educational Needs Strategic Board. This will lead to the development of an early help framework for key groups in order to support schools, target key groups and prevent children being permanently excluded.
- 14.2.** Team Around the Child/School meetings are being coordinated with teams across Children's Services to support planning and early help for year 7 children with three or more suspensions. The learning from the early help approach will be shared with the Inclusion Steering Group.
- 14.3.** The Place Based Education Group are developing a Three Tier Alternative Provision Strategy, Pre-16 vocational offer and belonging framework; delivering a coordinated and systematic approach to support children to remain in or return to mainstream education.
- 14.4.** The Place Based Working Group will evaluate the effectiveness of the enhanced transitions project in preventing suspensions and permanent exclusions in order to build on areas of best practice.
- 14.5.** A practice review group for multi-agency partners to come together and identify common themes and areas of learning in respect of permanently excluded children will be held in November 2024. The findings will be reported to the Quality Assurance Delivery Group of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the Plymouth Education Board.
- 14.6.** The Education Participation and Skills Team has set up a task and finish group to develop a professional development offer for schools, Children's Social Care and multi-agency partners across the local area. The offer is being developed using learning and best practice from other local authorities and delivery will begin in term two 2024, running 6 times per year.

- 14.7.** The impact of our approach to reducing permanent exclusions and suspensions is reported monthly at Practice and Performance meetings where the effectiveness of our plans is measured against Key Performance Indicators.
- 14.8.** The Ordinarily Available Provision and Graduated Approach to Inclusion resources is being embedded across the city. The impact will be evaluated through the Special Education Needs and Disabilities steering groups.
- 14.9.** The Reducing Exclusion Project will be delivered and evaluated with learning shared in terms 3 and 4 (Spring Term) 2025.
- 14.10.** The impact of the Vulnerable Pupils Panel in preventing permanent exclusions will be evaluated through the Plymouth Education Board.
- 14.11.** The impact of the Anti-Vaping Project on preventing permanent exclusions for behaviour related to VScMDA will be evaluated and reported to the Plymouth Education Board.
- 14.12.** Learning from Serious Case Reviews of Children in Care who are permanently excluded will be embedded within the training to schools and multi-agency professionals across the local area. It will also be used in the development of practice standards across Children's Social Care and Education, Participation and Skills.
- 14.13.** The Special Schools Outreach Project will be evaluated through the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategic Group.
- 14.14.** The actions from this paper will be embedded in the exclusions and suspensions team plan held by Education Participation and Skills. This paper will be presented to the Plymouth Education Board in September 2024 and the Education and Social Care Scrutiny Committee in October 2024.

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Date: 02 October 2024

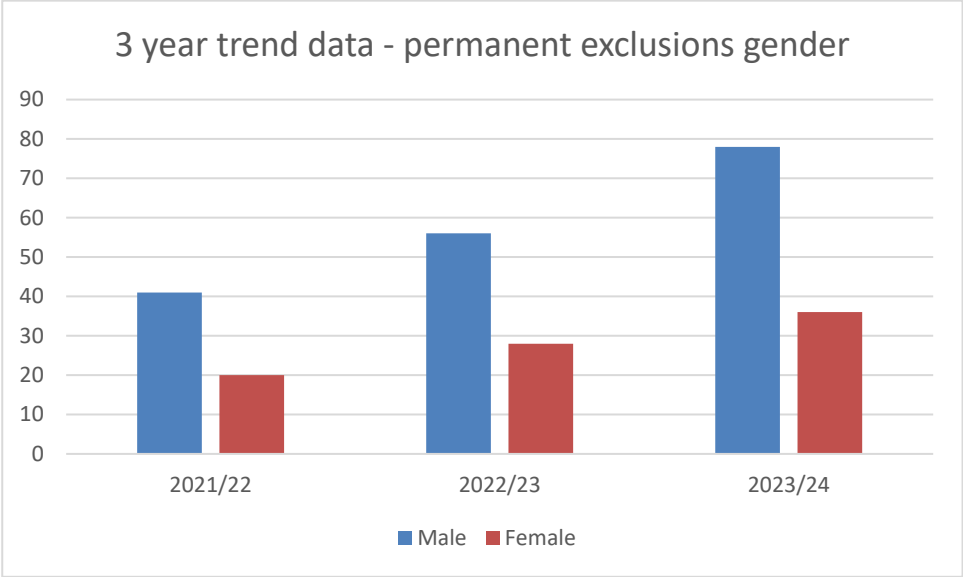
Appendix I – Plymouth permanent exclusion comparative data national and regional benchmarks.

Permanent Exclusions Academic Year	England		South West		Plymouth	
	Total PEX	Rate	Total PEX	Rate	Total PEX	Rate
2019/20	5057	0.06	556	0.07	43	0.11
2020/21	3928	0.04	391	0.05	37	0.09
2021/22	6497	0.08	682	0.09	45	0.12
2022/23	9376	0.11	1002	0.13	84	0.22
2023/24	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	114	0.3

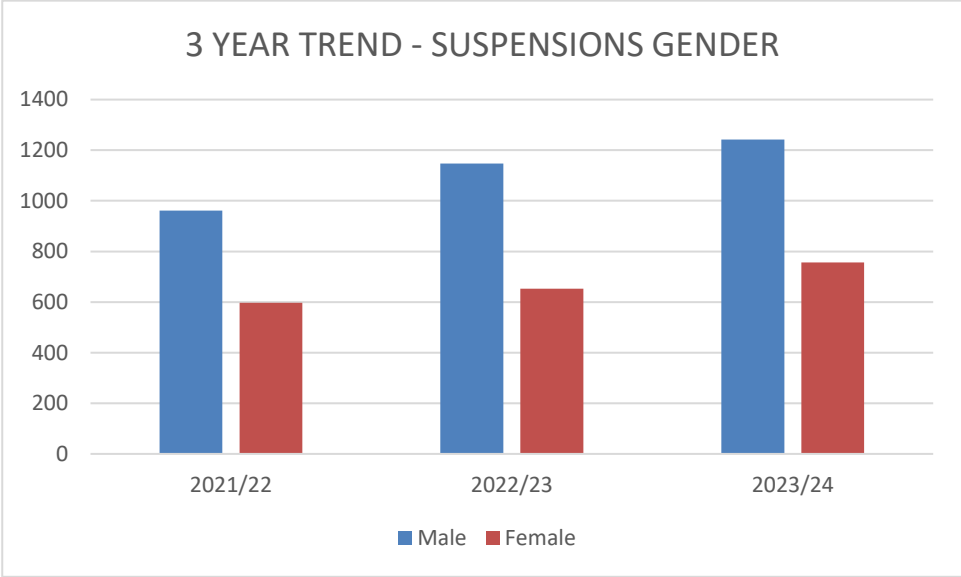
Appendix 2 – Plymouth suspensions comparative data national and regional benchmarks

Suspensions	England		South West		Plymouth	
	Total suspensions	Rate	Total suspensions	Rate	Total suspensions	Rate
2019/20	310,528	3.8	34,820	4.6	1,644	4.2
2020/21	352,470	4.3	41,517	5.5	2,618	6.7
2021/22	578,280	6.9	62,318	8.1	3,939	10.1
2022/23	786,961	9.3	90,257	11.7	5,163	13.2
2023/24	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	7,285	18.7

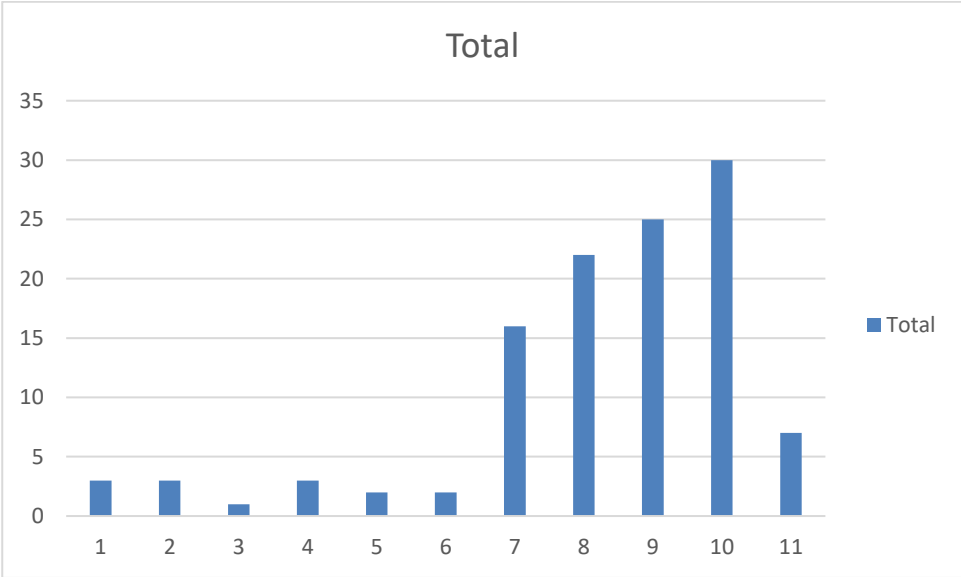
Appendix 3 – Permanent exclusion three year trend data - gender



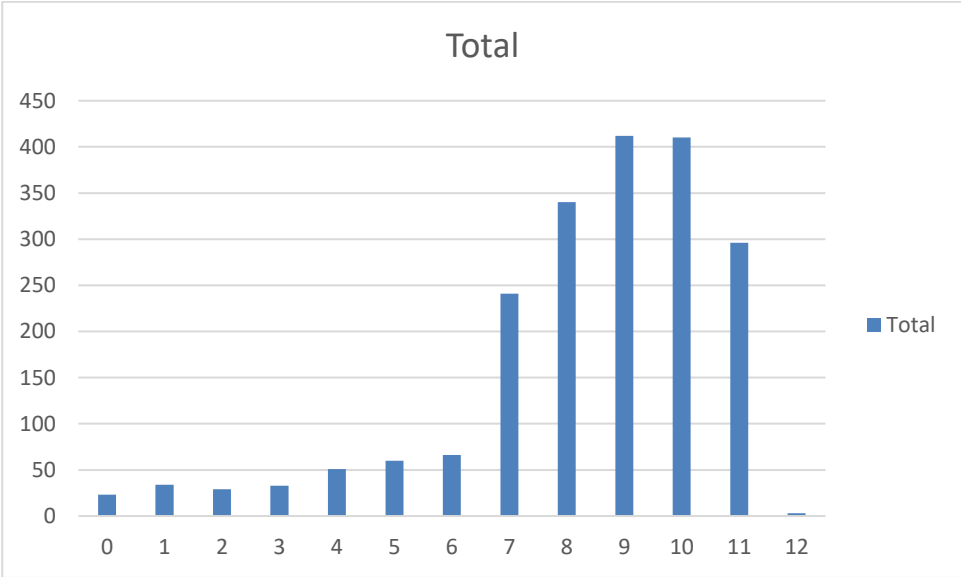
Appendix 4 – Suspensions trend data, gender



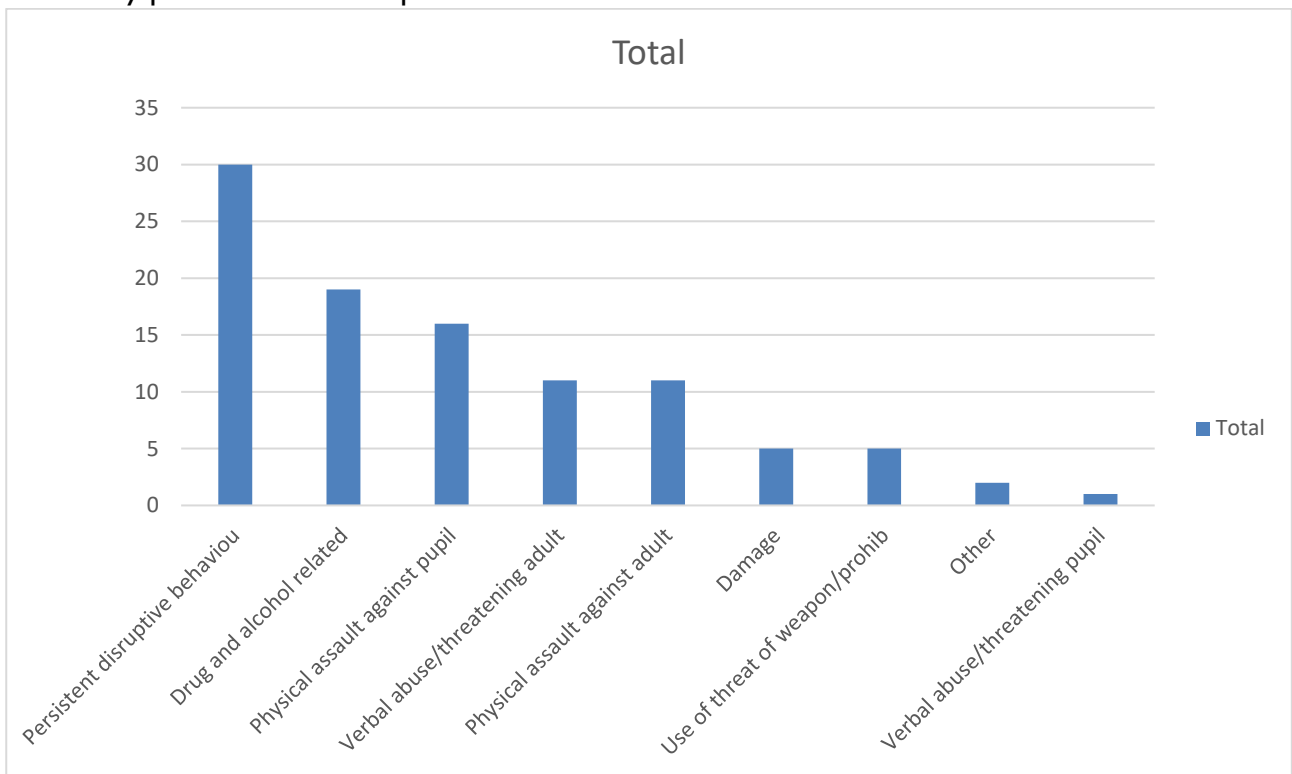
Appendix 5 – Permanent exclusion by year group



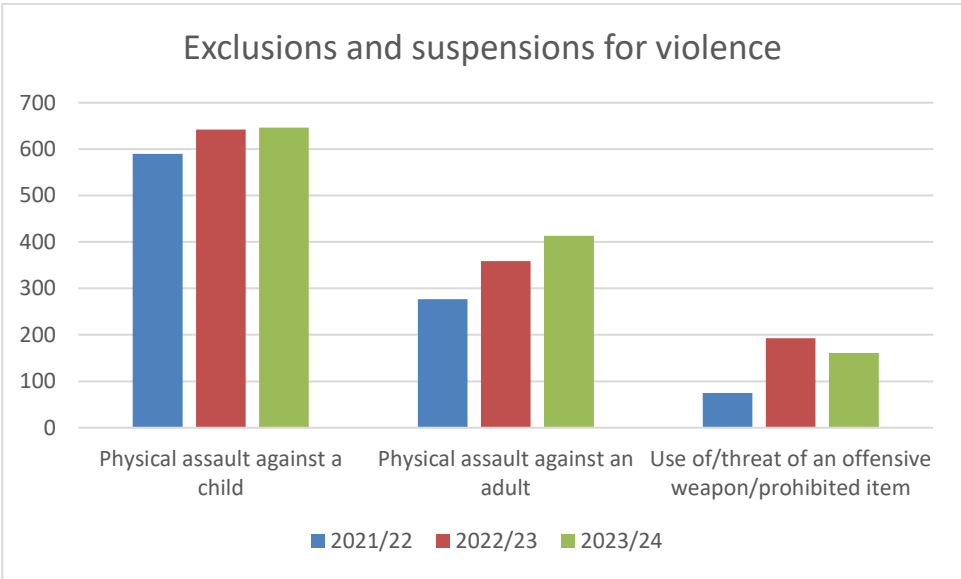
Appendix 6 – Suspension by year group



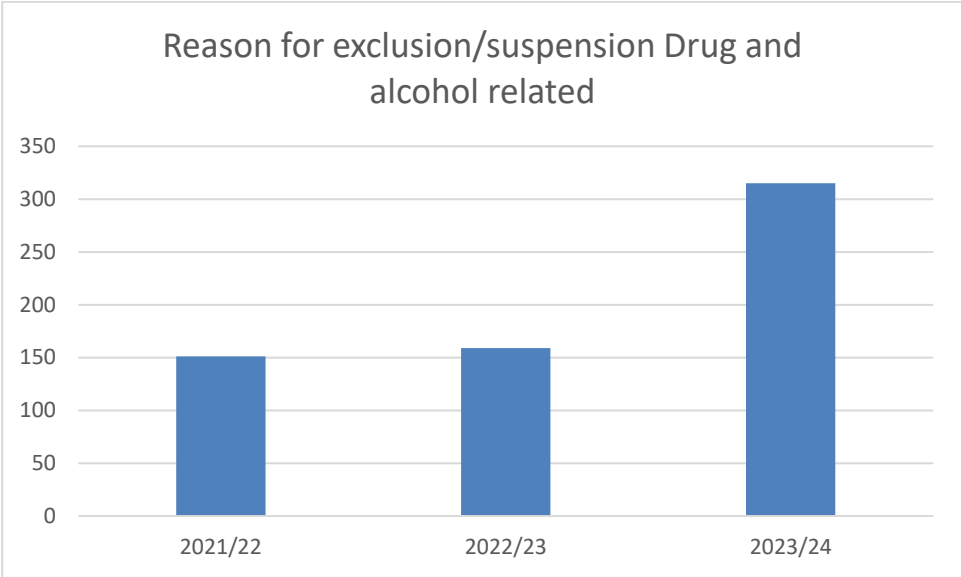
Appendix 7
Secondary phase – reason for permanent exclusion



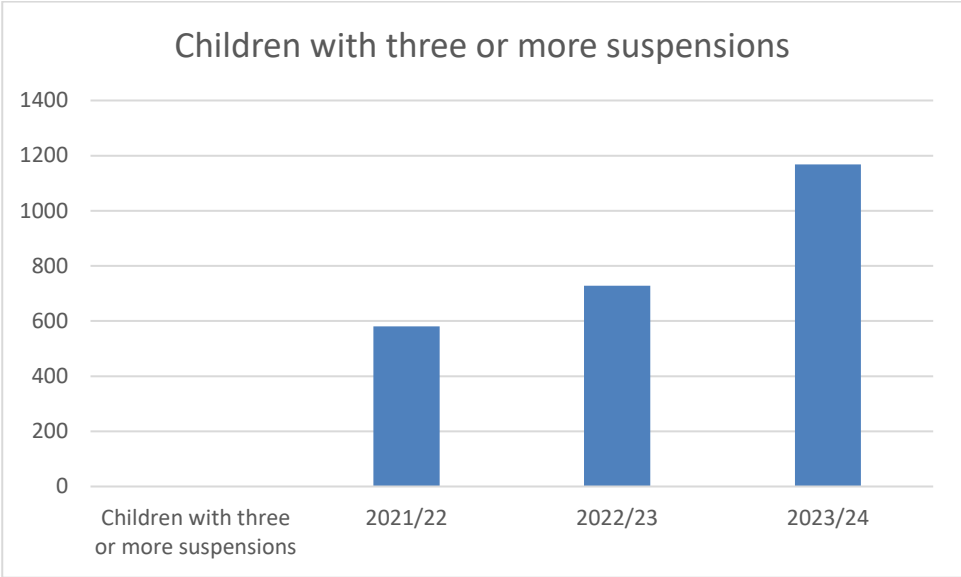
Appendix 8 – Exclusions and suspensions for violence



Appendix 9 - Drug and alcohol related exclusions and suspensions



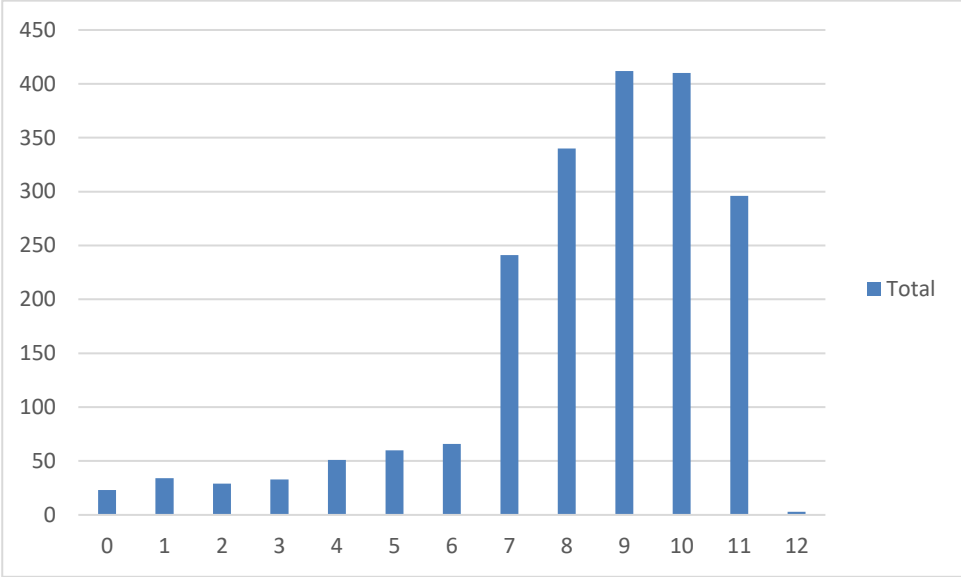
Appendix 10 – Children with 3 or more suspensions



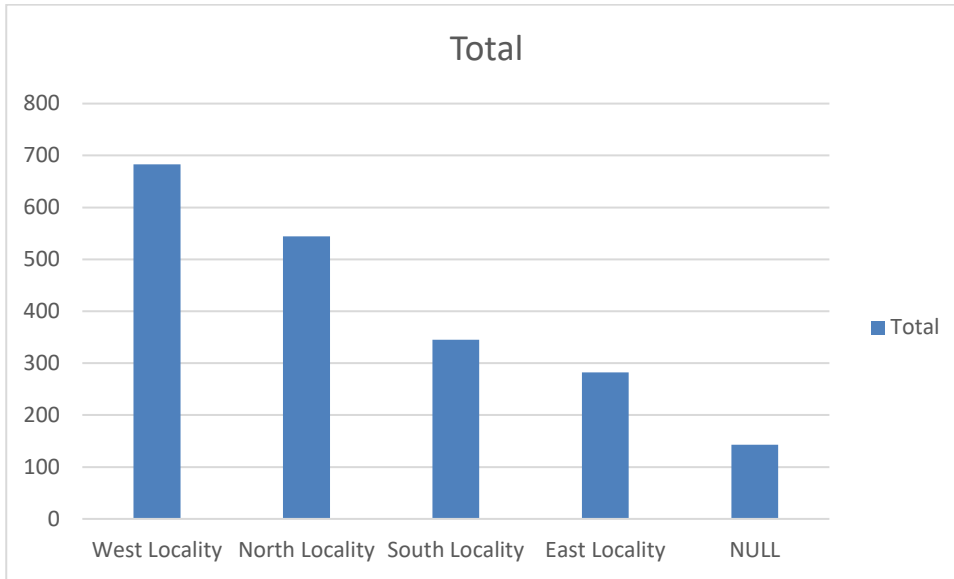
Appendix II – Children with multiple suspensions

Number of children	Number of suspensions
410	3 to 5
315	6 to 10
174	11 to 15
101	16 to 20
72	21 to 25
41	26 to 30
25	31 to 35
10	36 to 40
10	41 to 45
<10	46 to 50
<10	51 to 55
<10	56 to 60
<10	61
<10	71

Appendix 12 – Three or more suspensions by year group

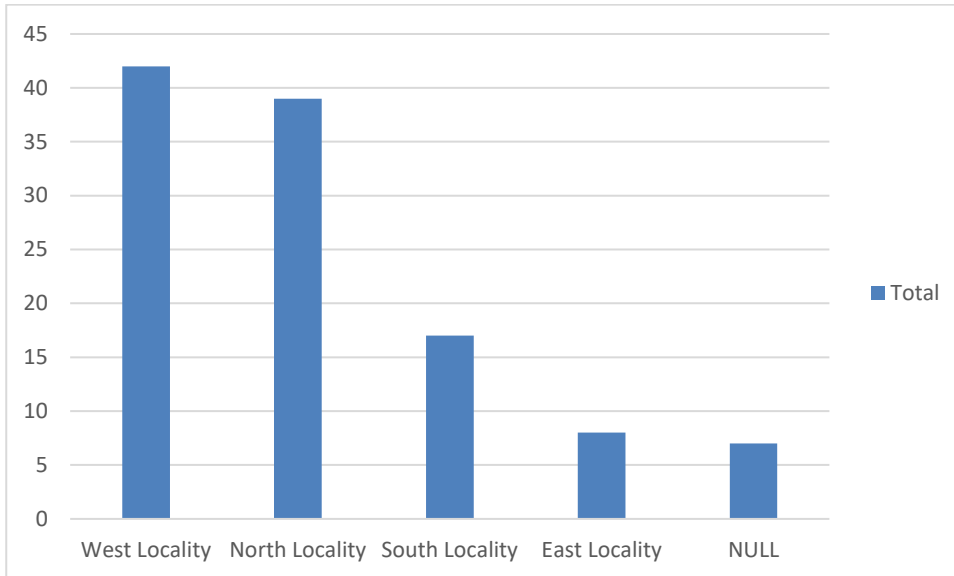


Appendix 13 – Suspensions by locality



* Within the data set there are children with a null return for locality. For many this is due to an out of area home address. The addresses of all the children are known. For some Plymouth children their home locality is not reflected in the data set. Action is being taken to address the anomaly.

Appendix I4– Permanent exclusions by locality



*Within the data set there are children with a nil return for locality. The addresses of the children are known. Their locality was not reflected in the data set. Action is being taken to address the anomaly.

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	Elective Home Education Report
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Isabelle Kolinsky
Contact Email:	Isabelle.kolinsky@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	EHE Deep Dive
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel with detailed information around the Council's work on Elective Home Education. The report provides an overview of a deep dive undertaken with significant levels of data and trends in Plymouth.

Recommendations and Reasons

- I. For the Children, Young People and Families Panel to note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- I. N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The ambition of Plymouth's 'Bright Future' plan is for all our children to live full and happy lives. The plan recognises the importance of the local area partnership working together to ensure that children are supported by a system which works seamlessly to spot difficulties early, responds quickly and effectively, and makes sure that help is there for as long as it is needed. The learning from this paper is being used across the local area partnership to plan and deliver collaborative, evidenced based approaches and support our collective ambition for children.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

N/A

Financial Risks

N/A

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Lisa Linscott, Service Director for EPS											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes 01/10/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Creswell approved via email Date approved: 27/09/2024											

Elective Home Education Report

Date: 2nd October 2024

From: Isabelle Kolinsky



1.0. What is Home Education?

1.1. Elective home education (EHE) is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their child(ren) at home, instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority other than at a school, for example for children who are too ill to attend school.

2.0. Home Education in Plymouth

2.1. Across the full academic year 2023/24 there were 888 children registered as home educated at given point during the year. The 471 new registrations to EHE equates to 53.04% of the total cohort across the year.

2.2. On 28th June 2024 there were 774 statutory school aged children registered as home educated in Plymouth this was an increase of 42.9% (256) from 2022/23 and 79.58% (343) in 2021/22 (appendix 1). After this date the number of children electively home educated fell by 154 when the year 11 cohort were no longer statutory school aged.

2.3. The continuing rise in the number of children being withdrawn from schools to be home educated is a concern, particularly at the secondary phase.

3.0. What we are doing well

3.1. As a result of our relational approach to supporting families who home educate, more families are requesting home visits or reaching out for advice and support. We have embedded arrangements for children and families who need our support to return to school.

3.2. We are confident that our arrangements for oversight and monitoring the suitability of home education are effective. In respect of home educated children the Children's Services Inspection report states '*Oversight of this cohort of children is beginning to improve and work is under way to strengthen how services work more effectively together to monitor and promote the welfare of these children.*' (Published 15th March 2024).

3.3. Following the Rapid Review of Child C a series of [technical papers, local authority protocols and multi-agency working agreements](#) were formally approved by the multi-agency Child Safeguarding Practice Review sub group of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership (PSCP) on 7th July 2022 and rolled out across all agencies. In addition. The resources published by Plymouth City Council set out the process for all schools to notify the Local Authority (LA) when a parent decides to electively home educate. This includes:

- schools maintained by the LA
- academies
- free schools
- Independent schools

3.4. When the LA is informed that the parent of a child or young person is considering home education, the school notifies the Attendance Support Team using a notification form. We ask that schools seek the consent of the parent to keep the child on roll for up to 10 school days in order to enable an LA caseworker to conduct a home visit and provide information, advice and guidance to the family and to see whether we can assist in resolving any school-based issues. Parents do not have to engage with this process. During the 10 day period, checks are also made with Children's Social Care. If the child is open to Children's Social Care the Social Worker is notified and joint action taken to ensure that any decision made regarding a child's education is in their best interests.

3.5. If a child has an EHCP, the 0-25 SEND Team are notified of the parent's intention to home educate and schools are expected to coordinate an early review of the child's EHCP prior to removal from roll. If a child has an EHCP and is registered at a special school, the child must not be removed from the roll of the school without the permission of the local authority.

3.6. Once a child is registered as home educated, home educators are contacted by the Inclusion Attendance and Welfare Service within 3 months to provide information and evidence of their provision. This is then assessed by the Home Education Advisor who is a qualified teacher. The Home Education Advisor provides the family with a comprehensive report regarding their assessment with recommendations.

3.7. If a child's home education provision is considered to be suitable, the assurance checks happen once every 12 months. If it is felt that home education provision is not suitable, action is taken by the Home Education Advisor to provide information, advice and guidance to the family about how to develop their provision. Where there continue to be concerns about the suitability of the home education provision, the child is registered as a Child Missing Education (CME) and the case is RAG rated and monitored at a weekly meeting with the team manager.

3.8. In cases of CME, a casework officer will try to engage the family in order to support a child back to school. Where these attempts are unsuccessful and the child continues to be a CME, appropriate statutory enforcement action is taken to enforce school attendance. In 2023/24 academic year to date 31 formal notices have been issued and 10 School Attendance Orders.

3.9. Where parents do not comply with a School Attendance Order, a pathway of legal enforcement is commenced. However, the magistrates courts are limited in terms of penalties and cannot enforce registration and attendance at school. As a result, parents who breach a School Attendance Order are convicted and issued with a fine. In these instances, a child will continue to be missing education and the Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare team will continue to undertake casework work with the family until the child is on the roll of a school.

4.0. Opportunities for improvement

4.1. Early help to prevent children being withdrawn to home education needs to be prioritised across children's services and with schools. Plymouth City Council is committed to reducing the numbers of vulnerable children in the city who move into home education. Achieving this will involve applying effective systems for early identification so that children, young people and their families are supported as far as is possible to remain in the school system.

5.0. Data methodology

5.1. The data used within this report has been sourced using data from Eclipse, CAPITA and the Inclusion Scorecard. The data is not routinely available through an automated system. The CAPITA One Strategic review will provide an automated system of self-service which will increase capacity and routine access to data.

6.0. Home education and gender

6.1. Of the 774 children registered as home educated on 28th June 2024 in Plymouth (364 (46.38%) were male and 410 (53.62%) female. Home educated males and females share common themes in respect of likelihood of being likely to have had low rates of school attendance prior to elective home education. Rates of children with previous suspensions and requiring SEND Support is high across the home educated cohort.

7.0. EHE by year group

7.1. Rates of children being withdrawn to home education increase significantly when children transition into mainstream secondary school. The Local Area SEND Inspection reflects a view that primary schools do not have the needs of children with SEND assessed in a timely way and as a result their needs are not met or understood when they transition into secondary education. The inspection report goes on to say that too many children and young people with SEND do not get the necessary help to succeed in secondary school. Sometimes, this is because they do not receive the support they need before secondary school, or for other pupils it is because they do not get the help they need when they are at secondary school. These pupils are also more likely to have poor attendance than other similar pupils nationally.

7.2. Once children leave primary school and transition into year 7 the likelihood of a child being home educated increases significantly. Trend analysis shows a 229.41% increase in the numbers of children being withdrawn to home education in year 7 when compared to the numbers of children in year 6. This increasing trend continues throughout secondary schools and numbers of children in home education peak in year 10 (appendix 2 and 3).

7.3. Transition arrangements have been strengthened through the city's 'place-based' approach. The needs of children are now captured with greater consistency and accuracy as they transition from primary to secondary through the transition portal. This has meant that children with additional needs are identified from the earliest point. The 2024/25 academic year is the second in which the portal will run. In addition, an early years into primary portal is running for the first time in this academic year. The most significant impact of the portals has been to achieve consistency of transition practice across schools and trusts: all primary and secondary schools have engaged, and significant numbers of children have had their needs identified.

7.4. The Home Education Team has engaged with families through the Plymouth Parent Carer Voice and presented at the Special Education Needs and Disabilities Conference in the summer term. As a result of our involvement at the event, there were a number of families supported to effect change in their child's education provision, this included providing support to keep children with an EHCP in school and signposting families to the social prescription pilot.

7.5. We are holding termly information, advice and guidance sessions across the city.

7.6. We are writing to home educators at key transition points to ensure that they are aware of the options available for them in the city and the routes available for home educated children to access formal examinations and qualifications.

7.7. We have launched a Home Education Facebook page to provide information for families. The Facebook page was launched in the Spring Term and now has c120 followers. The number continues to increase. The platform is used to provide information and signpost families to activities, events and support.

8.0 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

8.1. The Local Area SEND Inspection Report reflects the concern that too many children in school either do not have their needs identified or met in schools. This reflects the trend that we see with regards to children who need Special Education Needs (SEN) Support being withdrawn to home education and the reasons parents cite in their decision making. 233 (30.1%) of the current EHE cohort were registered as needing SEN Support in school, this is an increase of 167.8% (146) when compared to 2022/23 and 202.6% (156) when compared to 2021/22 (appendix 1). Of the current cohort 150 children (77.32%) were deregistered from Plymouth secondary schools.

8.2. Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) require special consideration in order to successfully implement an efficient education. Of the current cohort of children in the city who were registered as home educated on 30th June 2024, 31 (4%) have an EHCP. This is an increase of 181.81% (20) when compared to 2022/23. The current number of 31 is an increase of 5 (13.79%) when compared to 2021/22 when there were 27 children with EHCPs who were home educated. (appendix 1). Of the cohort of 31 four were de-registered from Plymouth special schools, six from Plymouth Primary Schools and 16 from Plymouth secondary schools. The remaining five children have not previously been registered at a school. With the exception of the children previously on the roll of a special school, is not known whether a child had an EHCP whilst in school or whether it was issued during the current period of home education.

8.3. A report produced by the Health Surveillance Agency in Plymouth highlighted that between 2018 and 2021; of all the episodes of children with recorded SEND being home educated, social, emotional and mental health represents 46% of the cohort. Moderate learning difficulty has the second highest prevalence (13.5%) and Autism Spectrum Disorder is the third highest (9%) of those children with recorded SEND Needs. The EHE Team are currently engaging with the Health Surveillance Agency to engage with a social prescribing project for EHE children and their families.

8.4. It has not been possible to conduct an analysis of SEN area of need as there is no reliable data set for this specific focus. Action is being taken to address the data quality on CAPITA and is expected to be completed within the next 12 months. Once complete this with further our understanding.

8.5. The EHE Team meet regularly with the 0-25 SEND Team to discuss and jointly plan for children with EHCPs. This has ensured joint oversight and continuity of casework for children.

8.6. We are strengthening our links with the Plymouth Parent Carer Voice (PPCV), the Home Education Team is working with the PPCV to develop opportunities for co-production. We seek to understand the lived experience of children and families through multi-agency case audits and appreciative enquiries with families who home educate. The learning will be captured and shared with schools and partners to improve practice in schools so that families do not feel that they have no choice but to home educate.

8.7. The correlation between pupil absence, being known to children's social care and home education is strong. Currently Targeting Support meetings are held jointly between the Attendance Support Team and Early Help Teams. From September 2024 the SEND Service will join the meetings for schools with high rates of absence for their SEN cohort.

8.8. The Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) resource has been co-produced with families and partners across education, health and social care. It includes information and resources to support schools in their work with a specific chapter on collaborating with families. The resource clearly

identifies what schools must do support all children and young people. The universal provision described in the OAP is the offer created by schools to ensure they are inclusive by design and consistently work to reduce as many barriers as possible. This clearly allows schools and professionals to then identify where a child is making progress with a consistent universal offer and where extra targeted provision will need be given in a mainstream environment. Implementation and impact of the OAP will be evaluated through applications for targeted funding, feedback from the educational psychology services and specialist teachers via their termly consultations, parent surveys and the reduction of numbers of children being withdrawn to home education.

8.9. Plymouth City Council has collaborated with special schools within the city to develop and outreach offer of support for mainstream schools. This was launched in September 2024. The outreach offer provides specialist advice and support to professionals in mainstream schools so that they can be equipped to meet the needs of complex children and/or cohorts within their school.

8.10. The prevalence of SEND within the home educated cohort of children has been prioritised by the Inclusion Steering Group of the SEND Strategic Board. Case studies of children will be shared with the group and will inform planning and action to improve inclusion and outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

9.0. EHE from Schools and Multi-Academy Trusts

9.1. In Plymouth we have a number of schools who are over-represented in the rates of children being withdrawn to elective home education. These schools also have high suspension and pupil mobility rates.

9.2. There are four secondary schools with disproportionately high rates of children being withdrawn to elective home education. These schools are situated in areas of Plymouth with high rates of deprivation. The schools account for 37.6% of all new registrations to home education in Plymouth.

9.5. Primary schools with multiple children being withdrawn to home education are often because of a parent withdrawing all of their children from the same school to be home educated. Nonetheless, the numbers of EHE have increased year on year and this academic year to date is the highest rate that we have ever seen in Plymouth.

9.6. A pilot was launched on 10th June 2024 based on a best practice model that was developed in Portsmouth and which had a significant impact on reducing the rates of home education. The purpose of the pilot in Plymouth is to reduce the rate of home education. The impact of the pilot will be evaluated in October 2024. If the pilot is successful, it will be rolled out to all schools in the city.

9.7. The Director for Education holds Inclusion Meetings with multi academy trusts to analyse and strengthen areas for improvement; informing strategic planning for inclusive approaches and best practice across the city.

9.8. The first meeting of the EHE Task and Finish Group was held on 5th July 2024. The purpose of the Task and Finish Group is to review the EHE Pilot and consider best practice approaches to reducing home education which can be rolled out across all schools in the city. The next meeting of the task and finish group is scheduled for 15th October 2024.

9.9. Each school has an allocated Access and Attendance Officer and an Early Help Link Officer. Access and Attendance Officers are working in small teams across each locality, contacting schools

on a fortnightly basis to discuss any child who is missing out on education. In addition, termly meetings are being held jointly between Early Help and Attendance Support Teams, the 0-25 SEND Team will join the meetings at secondary schools. Working across education and Children's Social Care will ensure effective joint planning and support for individual children.

10.0. Reasons for EHE

10.1. Prior to September 2023, the reason for EHE was not recorded consistently. From September 2023, we have started to record reasons and have recently aligned our initial EHE Questionnaire to include the list of reasons prescribed by the Department for Education. In every case, parents are contacted to offer an initial home visit to discuss their decision to EHE. The purpose of the visit is to resolve any issues with school, offer advice, guidance and information. If parents do not respond to our enquiries an Officer will attempt to home visit twice. Extensive effort is made to meet and engage with the family.

10.2. Of the 471 new EHE registrations in 2023/24 child mental health (28.34% (133)) stands out as a reason for many parents electing to home educate. Health partners of the EHE Task and Finish Group have agreed to undertake a deep dive analysis into this cohort of children, the learning from the thematic review will inform the development of practice standards across the local area. A high proportion of the other reasons for parents withdrawing to home educate indicate a lack of parental confidence in how their child is being supported in school.

10.3. Plymouth City College are funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency to provide a 14-16 curriculum for EHE children. On 30th May 2024 there were 673 children in home education. Of the cohort 123 Key Stage 4 children were accessing the City College provision which is equivalent to 75% of the KS4 Cohort. The provision provides a range of functional skills and vocational qualifications. The Home Education Team meet monthly with the College to track and monitor attendance and engagement by home educated children at the provision. This ensures effective oversight and swift action for families where it appears that children are not receiving a suitable, fulltime education. In the majority of cases the City College provision is effective in meeting the needs of the children who attend. A more flexible approach to the curriculum at school may prevent children being withdrawn to home education at KS4. The City College provision is operating a waiting list. The College has an offer that schools can purchase for their students, however many schools feel that they do not have the funding available to commission long term vocational packages for students. In addition, the College provision is full of EHE children which limits the availability of the traded offer to schools.

10.4. Many parents that we speak to feel that they have no other choice but to home educate and have reached the end of what they feel they can tolerate for their child in school. We are working with schools to reduce the rates of children being withdrawn to electively home educate and have launched a pilot with schools that have the highest rates of home education.

10.5. A key strand of the 2024/25 'place-based' plan is to develop further the relationship between City College Plymouth and school and Trust leaders so that a joint pre-16 vocational offer can be developed. An example of this would be the alignment of school timetables so that children are able to spend a proportion of their week studying a vocational option without a clash with core subjects. The aim of this programme will be to reduce the number of children who are engaged with a 14-16 programme of study at City College Plymouth who are registered as electively home educated as they are able to attend the College and remain on a school roll.

10.6. In 2023/24, 153 children were supported to return to school from home education. Of those 10 were returned to school as a result of a School Attendance Order and the remaining 143

returned with positive support and relational practice from the EHE team. 30 formal notices were issued parents to.

10.7. A reducing exclusions toolkit is being developed by the Schools Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead this will be informed by the learning from the pilot project led by the Education Psychology Service to prevent exclusions.

10.8. The Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood Task and Finish Group is developing support for children who moving into post 16 in order to reduce the numbers of vulnerable children not in education, employment or training.

11.0. Deep dive analysis

11.1. On 30th May 2024 there were 637 children registered as home educated of the cohort 79.79% (537) children identify as white British or white English. There are 80 children for whom we do not know the ethnicity. The ethnicity data is taken from the child's previous school information. If the child has never attended a maintained school in Plymouth, the data is unlikely to have been reported to Plymouth City Council. Of the 80 children for whom with have no recorded information about ethnicity, 62 have not been registered at a maintained school in Plymouth. Full academic year 2023/24 deep dive data will be available at the end of September 2024.

11.2. We are developing our reporting process to capture the ethnicity of all home educated children at the point that they are registered as home educated. Based on the current data set there are no emerging themes in respect of the Black and Minority Ethnic cohort.

11.3. Of the sample of 637 children, males who were persistently absent at school, have been suspended or who have SEND are more likely to become home educated than their female counterparts. Females who are home educated are more likely to have more than one episode of home education and are more likely to have been severely absent at school.

11.4. The quality of the data in respect of free school meals and pupil premium is being developed to enable accurate reporting and will be available from the end of September 2024.

11.5. Of the 673 children who are home educated on 30th May 2024:

- 79 (11.74%) had more than one episode of home education
- 15 (2.23%) have been permanently excluded from school
- 178 (26.45%) have had one or more suspension
- 7 (1.04%) have been on a part timetable
- 28 (4.16%) have an EHCP
- 194 (28.831%) require SEN Support.
- 230 (34.18%) were severely absent (<50% attendance) from school in their last academic year of school registration.
- 222 (33%) were persistently absent (<90% attendance) from school in their last academic year of school registration.

11.6. Poor levels of school attendance and high rates of absence correlate strongly with becoming electively home educated. Of the 515 children for whom we have prior school attendance data, 231 (44.85%) were severely absent (less than 50% attendance) from school, 232 (45%) were persistently absent (50 – 89% attendance) (Appendix 4).

11.7. Using attendance data from the last two academic years we are able to get an indication of the link between home education and school attendance.

11.8. The data shows a strong correlation between severe absence, SEND, suspensions and children's social care involvement. For the severely absent cohort these are risk factors to becoming EHE. There were 231 (44.85%) children who were severely absent from school prior to being home educated:

- Nine have an EHCP
 - 99 required SEN Support
 - Less than 10 children had been on a part timetable.
 - 28 children had one previous episode of home education.
 - Less than 10 had two or more previous episodes of home education .
 - 127 children have been known to Children's Social Care in the last six years.
 - 14 children are currently on a Child in Need (CiN) Plan or Child Protection (CP) Plan
-
- Less than 10 children were in receipt of free school meals.
 - Less than 10 children are recorded as being part of a service family.
 - Less than 10 children were recorded as Pupil Premium.
 - 100 children had received one or more suspension.

11.9. The data shows a strong correlation between persistent absence, previous episodes of home education, previous social care involvement and SEND. For the persistently absent cohort these are risk factors to becoming EHE. Of the sample of 515 children who were home educated in 2023/24, 232 (45%) were persistently absent from school prior to being home educated:

- 12 have an EHCP
- 68 required SEN Support
- Less than 10 had been on a part timetable.
- 197 children had one previous episode of home education.
- 21 children had between two and five previous episodes of home education.
- 89 children have been known to Children's Social Care in the last six years.
- 12 children are currently on a Child in Need Plan or Child Protection plan.
- Less than 10 children are recorded as being part of a service family.
- 68 children had received one or more suspension.

11.10. A quality assurance process is being developed to gain a deeper understanding of common themes in order to share the learning and consider preventative approaches to early identification of risk factors and preventing EHE with a particular focus in children who have had a social worker, and children who have had previous episodes of home education.

11.11. Every school has now been assigned an Access and Attendance Officer who will track attendance data using the inclusion scorecard on a fortnightly basis. The Officers will contact the schools to discuss children who are at risk of becoming persistently absent, those with 10 days of absence and to agree a joint approach for all severely absent children. In addition, Officers will meet at least once a term with each school in Plymouth to discuss children who need support to remove barriers to attendance. This new approach will be live across all schools in September 2024.

11.12. The Extended Role Officer of the Virtual School is conducting a desk top analysis of behaviour policies across schools in Plymouth, measuring their impact against school level data. The findings of the research will be presented to the Plymouth Education Board and the Quality Assurance Delivery Group. The learning will inform the ongoing review and development of service delivery plans in respect of home education, suspensions and exclusions.

12.0. Children Missing Education

12.1. A child missing education (CME) is defined as a statutory school aged child who is not registered at any school. Of the 673 children home educated on 30th May 2024, less than 10 are recorded as having been on a part timetable whilst at school and 42 had one or more episodes of CME.

12.2. Of the CME Cohort, less than 10 had one or more suspensions prior to EHE and 35.71% (15) are known to Children's Social care.

12.3. All Children Missing Education are allocated an Access and Attendance Officer who undertakes casework with families to support the child to receive a suitable, full-time education at school or otherwise. As part of the casework Officers proactively engage with Children's Social Care in order to jointly plan for a child to access education.

13.0. Part Time Timetable cohort

13.1. Schools submit information about children on part time timetables to the local authority. These children are then tracked and monitored on a termly basis. The 0-25 SEND Team and Education Psychology Team are provided with the list of children on part time timetables to enable follow up at planning consultation meetings in school (Educational Psychology Service) or as part of EHCP casework.

13.2. Schools will meet at least once every 6 weeks with their allocated Access and Attendance Officer to discuss children who are severely and persistently absent from school. These meetings are held jointly with Children's Social Care. In addition, the Attendance Support Team have fortnightly contact with schools to discuss children who are severely absent from school or at risk of persistent absence (which will include children on part timetables) to inform joint planning and early help to remove barriers to attendance.

14.0. Duration and episodes of EHE

14.1. Of the deep dive sample of 673 home educated children, 79 (11.74%) home have had more than one episode of home education (appendix 5 and 6.). Most home educated children are home educated once only.

14.2. Of the 79 children who have been home educated more than once:

- 65 have had two episodes of home education.
- 14 have had between three and six episodes of home education.

14.3. Of the 65 children with two episodes of home education:

- 50.77% live in the West Locality.
- 32% are known to require SEN Support.
- Less than 10 have an EHCP.

- 29.3% have had one or more suspensions.
- 53.8% were known to Children's Social Care in the last 6 years.

14.4. Of the 14 children with between three and six episodes of home education:

- 45.45% live in the West Locality.
- 36.36% live in the North Locality.
- 27.27% are known to require SEN Support.
- 18.18% have received one or more suspension.
- 45.45% were known to Children's Social Care in the last 6 years.

15.0. EHE by Neighbourhood and Locality

15.1. The correlation between deprivation and EHE is strong, the majority of home educated children come from neighbourhoods with the highest levels of deprivation. This was reflected in the report produced by the Health Surveillance Agency which looked at data between 2018 and 2021. An analysis of the current EHE cohort reflects the same trend in 2024.

15.2. When looking at the neighbourhood data across all the localities, it is the neighbourhoods with the highest levels of deprivation which have the highest number of home educated children (appendix 6).

15.3. In addition to the pilot and task and finish group, a new Vulnerable Pupils Panel has been set up with schools and multi-agency partners across the local area. The panel is based on learning and best practice from Sutton Borough Council. The panel will be held as a partnership between education, health, police and Children's Social Care, providing early help and prevention to support children, removing barriers to their access and engagement with education. The panel will feed into the strategic review of alternative provision and report to the Plymouth Education Board.

16.0. Known to Children's Social Care

16.1. Of the 673 children, 252 have been known to Children's Social Care within the last 6 years. This does not assume that the child was on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, the data draws on any recorded contact with Children's Social Care.

16.2. If a child is on a Child Protection Plan at the point a parent notifies the LA of their intention to home educate steps are taken in partnership with Children's Social Care to keep the child on the roll of their school. If a child goes onto a Child Protection Plan during their period of home education, then steps are taken to work with Children's Social Care to support the child back into school. It is accepted that where a child is on a Child Protection Plan the environment will not be suitable for the child to receive and education. Any child who is home educated and on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan is allocated a key worker from the Home Education Team who will work with the child's Social Worker and as part of the child's plan.

16.3. Of the 673 children 32 were on Child Protection Plan or on a Child in Need Plan (appendix 7). All of the children on Child Protection Plans are secondary age children

16.4. For the children on Child Protection or Child in Need Plans, it is not known how long the plans were in place. In addition, the category of abuse is not known. More needs to be done to audit and understand this cohort to see whether there are common themes and opportunities to prevent home education. Of the cohort:

- Less than 10 children are primary school aged.
- 24 are secondary school aged.
- Less than 10 have been home educated for 0-3months.
- Less than then have been home educated for 3-6 months.
- Less than 10 have been home educated for 6-9 months.
- Less than 10 have been home educated for 12+ months.
- Ten children are recorded as requiring SEN Support
- 13 children received one of more suspension whilst at school.
- Less than 10 children have previous episodes of home education.
- 14 children were severely absent from school.
- 15 children were persistently absent from school.

16.5. An Attendance Charter has been co-designed with the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership and aims to support our collective ambition to make attendance everyone's business. The Charter will launch in September 2024.

16.6. 'A Strong Start to September' campaign was launched in August and is continuing throughout September. In addition to a media campaign, each school has been contacted within the first two weeks of September to identify any children who have not arrived back at school as expected, support has been made available to schools and families by the Attendance Support Team.

16.7. Each school has a single point of contact within the Attendance Support Team. An Attendance Officer meet at least once every 6 weeks with each school in the city to provide information, advice and guidance on matters relating to school attendance. These meetings are held jointly with Children's Social Care. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to discuss and agree casework referrals for severely absent children.

16.8. Attendance Officers use data from the Inclusion Scorecard to have targeted and early hep conversations with each school on a fortnightly basis to discuss and agree plans for:

- Children who are severely absent (<50% attendance) form school
- Children at risk of being persistently absent (90-65% attendance)
- Children with 10 or more days of absence (consecutive or culminative in 12 month period)

16.8.1. The expected outcome will be to see a reduction in rates of absence but to also ensure that children who are at risk of becoming electively home educated are supported to remain in school.

17.0. Safeguarding Children in Home Education

17.1. In May 2024 the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published a briefing paper Safeguarding Children in Elective Home Education. The golden thread running through the briefing paper is the lack of oversight for home educated children both from professionals and their wider network. The harms experienced by these children had a detrimental impact on their physical, emotional, and social development, alongside other factors associated with abuse and neglect, including malnutrition, and living in what were often described as squalid conditions.

17.2. The findings of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel reflect the findings of

Plymouth's Rapid Review of Child C and include:

- the limitations of professional oversight for children who are home educated.
- The invisibility of children who are home educated and the potential for significant harm where parents themselves have difficulties and are vulnerable.
- Lack of parental engagement and the need for professional curiosity.

17.3. The panel made a series of recommendations for safeguarding partnerships to assure themselves about the effectiveness of their local systems as they relate to the safeguarding practice for children who are electively home educated. As a result, a series of actions have been presented to the Quality Assurance Improvement Board of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership. These actions are embedded within the Home Education Service Delivery Plan.

17.4. Governance for the progress for delivery of the plan will be reported to the Plymouth Education Board and the Safeguarding Partnership on a quarterly basis.

18.0. Next steps

18.1. The Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Team will continue to improve data quality in respect of free school meals, ethnicity, SEN area of need and pupil premium to enable accurate reporting and targeting of resources to support early help.

18.2. The multi-agency EHE Task and Finish Group will engage with the Plymouth Parent Carer Voice to co-produce an early help framework for key groups in order to support schools, target key groups and prevent children being withdrawn to home education.

18.3. Analysis of impact and outcomes for home educated children who are registered with Plymouth City College. The learning will be used to develop the Pre-16 vocational offer which is a collaboration between the Place Based Working Group and Plymouth City College.

18.4. Plymouth Education Board to develop and implement Three Tier Alternative Provision strategy, Belonging Framework and Pre-16 Vocational offer - delivering a system which supports children to remain in or return to mainstream education.

18.5. A practice review group for multi-agency partners to come together and identify common themes and areas of learning in respect of safeguarding children who are excluded, missing out on education and home educated. This will be held jointly with the PSCP in November 2024. The findings will be reported to the Quality Assurance Delivery Group of the PSCP and the Plymouth Education Board.

18.6. The Education, Participation and Skills Service will roll out a program of professional development (3 times per year, starting in term 2) for schools and multi-agency professionals which will include modules in respect of school attendance, home education, exclusions and suspensions. The training will include the findings of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report and the learning from the practice review group.

18.7. The PSCP will agree a reporting cycle for the home educated and Children Missing Education cohort so that this can be built and embedded within safeguarding governance.

18.8. Monthly reporting of practice and performance against home education Key Performance Indicators:

- Number of registered as home educated.
- Number of new registrations to home education.
- Number of suitability checks completed.
- Number of suitability checks dip sampled as good or outstanding.
- Number of home educated children returning to mainstream school.

18.9. Plymouth's Home Education Policy will be reviewed and updated in partnership with home educating families in the Autumn Term 2024.

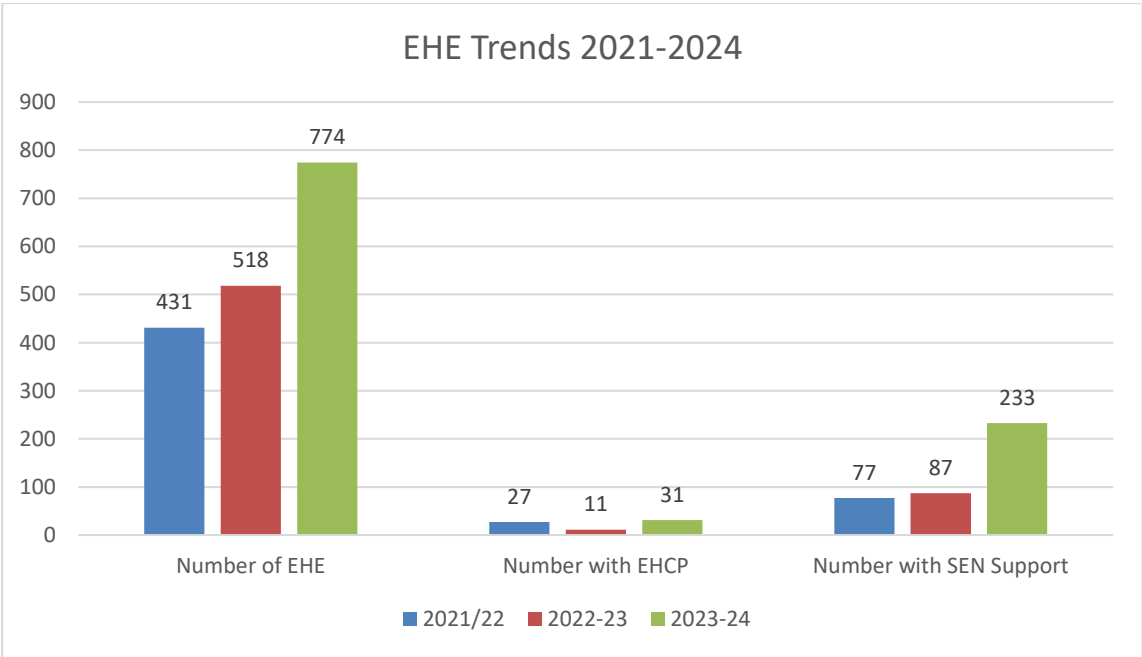
18.10 A research project between Plymouth City Council, Plymouth University and Plymouth Arts University will be implemented in the Autumn Term. The learning from the research will inform practice across the city to ensure that we understand the drivers for families who elect to home educate. From the learning we can create a preventative system to support vulnerable children to remain in school.

18.11. The actions from this paper are embedded in the EHE Service Plan held by Education Participation and Skills. The service plan and supporting data report was approved by the Plymouth Education Board in July 2024 and will be presented to the Education and Social Care Scrutiny Committee in October 2024.

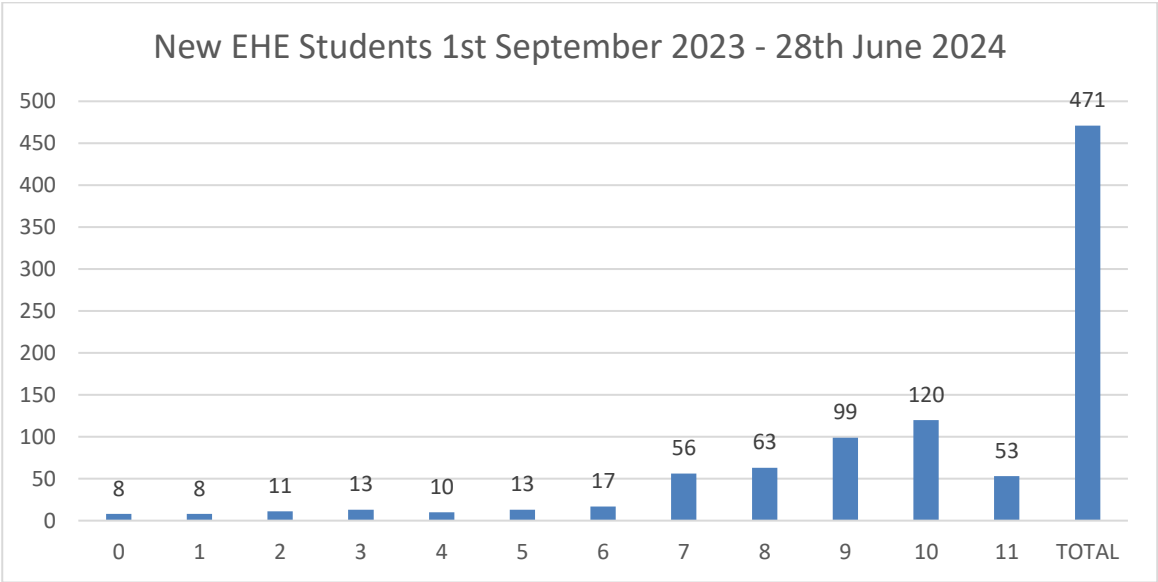
Author: Isabelle Kolinsky, Service Manager Inclusion and Welfare.

Date: 2nd October 2024

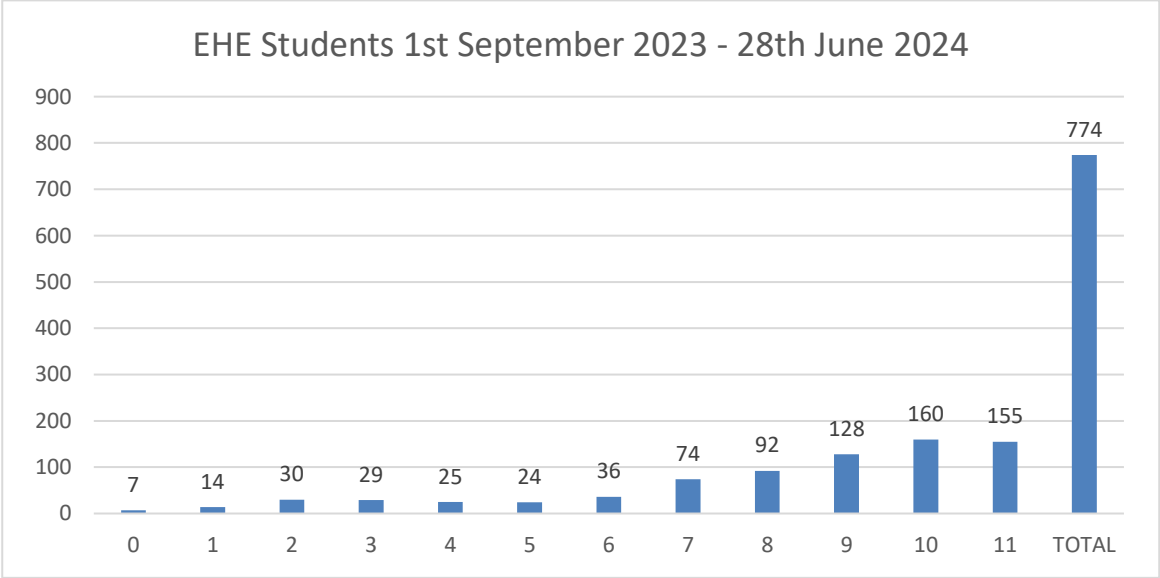
Appendix I – EHE Trend



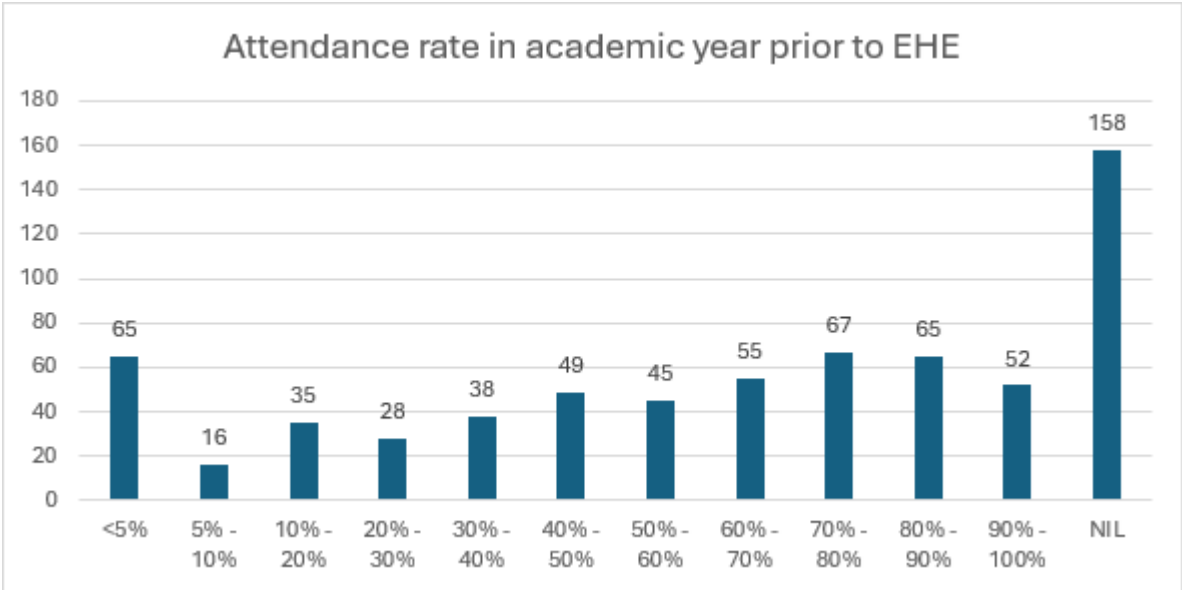
Appendix 2 – New registrations to EHE by year group 2023/24



Appendix 3 – EHE by year group



Appendix 4 – School attendance and EHE



Appendix 5 – Duration and Episodes of EHE

Duration of EHE	Number of children	Multiple episodes of EHE
0-3 months	111	13 (11.71%)
3-6 months	109	16 (14.96%)
6-9 months	117	15 (12.82%)
9-12 months	36	<10
12+ months	301	34 (11.29%)

Appendix 6. EHE episodes and vulnerability

Episodes EHE	No. Children	West Locality	South and East Locality	North Locality	Locality recorded Nil	SEN Support	EHCP	Suspensions	PEX	Known to CSC last 6 years	Previous CiN/CP	Current CP/Cin
1	594	210	197	175	12	169	24	157	14	209	30	32
2	65	33	15	14	<10	21	<10	19	<10	35	<10	0
3	11	<10	<10	<10	0	<10	0	<10	0	<10	0	0
4	<10	<10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<10	0	0
5	<10	0	0	<10	0	<10	0	0	0	<10	0	0
6	<10	<10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<10	0	0

Appendix 7 – EHE and Children’s Social Care

Childrens Social Care involvement	Number of children
Known to Children’s Social Care in last 6 years	252
Current Child Protection Plan	<10
Current Child in Need Plan	29

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	Children, Young People and Families Service Improvement Plan 2024-25 Q1 Progress and Impact Report – May to July 2024
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture, Events and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Temi Salimon
Contact Email:	Temi.salimon@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the progress of the plan to improve the quality, timeliness and outcomes of our children's social care services. This plan was developed following the ILACS and to take forward relevant priorities in Achieving Excellence, our strategic plan for Children's Services 2024-27. The strategic plan was agreed at the last Board. Progress has also been provided to Ofsted in our Annual Conversation with them which took place in July.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. It is recommended that the progress, key challenges and priorities for the next quarter are noted.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. None

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Keeping children, adults and communities in Plymouth safe.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Children's Social Care spend on placements for children in care and on agency social work staff due to the challenges recruiting permanent staff create significant financial pressures on the Council.

Financial Risks

Children's Social Care spend on placements for children in care and on agency social work staff due to the challenges recruiting permanent staff create significant financial pressures on the Council.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

The paper addresses risks to the organisation from keeping children in Plymouth safe and ensuring effective support to families to ensure outcomes for children and young people are good.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	Click here to enter text.	Leg	Click here to enter text.	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Assets	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Haley											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 23/09/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Laing approved via email											
Date approved: 02/10/2024											

Introduction

This report provides an update on the progress of the plan to improve the quality, timeliness and outcomes of our children's social care services. This plan was developed following the ILACS and to take forward relevant priorities in Achieving Excellence, our strategic plan for Children's Services 2024-27. The strategic plan was agreed at the last Board. Progress has also been provided to Ofsted in our Annual Conversation with them which took place in July.

The relevant priorities from Achieving Excellence being delivered through this plan are;

Priority 2. Targeted help for priority vulnerable groups

Priority 3. Timely and effective social work practice

Priority 4. The right homes for cared for children at the right time

Priority 6. Preparing all children and young people well for adulthood and ambitious employment.

Priority 7. A stable, highly skilled, well supported and high performing workforce.

Priority 8. An effective learning framework,

Priority 9. Strong partnerships and partnership governance arrangements

Priority 10. Enablers which support staff to do their jobs.

1. Progress on priority areas identified in the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

Out of Hours Service

1. We have acted to strengthen the Out of Hours response following Ofsted finding that the response to children out of hours was not always effective. The impact of staff turnover has been addressed with the use of Agency social workers and a permanent recruitment process has been underway throughout the year to fully stabilize the team. We have not as yet had any suitable candidates apply and are running the service on additional hours for permanent daytime staff and agency staff. Recruitment to the permanent posts remains a priority.
2. A programme of workforce development has been completed with the existing team to increase confidence in out of hours practice expectations, including strategy meetings, missing children, and adult safeguarding issues. Quality assurance is in place to evaluate practice improvements including from our Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP) during August with findings due to report to the September Board.
3. Alongside stabilizing and improving the quality of the existing service, a full review of the service has been completed to inform consideration of whether alternative service delivery models would support improved practices out of hours. A plan is now in place to develop an Emergency Duty model.

Children's Disability Service

4. In response to the Ofsted findings, an additional 26 children are now receiving support from the Children's Disability team as a result of an improved response to children receiving short breaks. This includes 20 children currently being assessed, 103 children in need, 8 children on child protection plans and 29 children in care.
5. Performance in key areas has improved during the year and as of the end July;
 - 88% of three-month summaries are up to date on the child's records.

- 100% of visits to children on CPPs and 93% of children in care are completed on time and 86% of visits to CIN are on time.
 - 64.8% of supervisions have been held on time. This is a focus for further improvement.
 - 93% of children have an up-to-date care plan, 100% of children with CPPs have an up-to-date protection plan and 70% of CIN plans are up to date. It is a current focus in the team to ensure all plans are up to date and are of good quality.
6. A monthly meeting is now in place to review all children whose liberty is being restricted, chaired by the Service Manager. A monthly multi-agency Transitions Meeting, led jointly by Children's Social Care and Adult's Social Care, has also been introduced and currently tracks all children and young people who are likely to need continuing health care or adult social care support post 18. This enables earlier care planning for children with the most complex needs and provides support and reassurance to young people and their families at the earliest opportunity.

LADO response.

7. In response to the need to strengthen our LADO response given the concerns confirmed by Ofsted, a new interim LADO took up post in February 2024 and good progress has been made to strengthen practice in priority areas including strengthening professional curiosity, reviewing actions from Consultations, Referrals and Managing Allegation Meetings, and improving the storage of information. Given concerns about earlier decision making, a second interim LADO was appointed to review the LADO activity during September - February 2024 and to progress any concerns identified, and this work is now complete. A new more reliable information storage system was introduced, and all records have been moved into this.
8. A centralised tracker is in place to support the oversight of actions from LADO meetings and their progress going forward, a programme of monthly quality assurance activity is in place to ensure the correct threshold is applied and that appropriate advice and decisions are made, and our SLIP is currently completing diagnostic activity to provide assurance of the current arrangements and improvements made with good progress being reported to the June PCIB. The LADO is delivering LADO workshops for the Partnership to build confidence in the LADO process.
9. The SLIP report to PCIB in June reported that all improvements needed had progressed with improved systems of recording and decision making, improved information to partners and full engagement of all key partners identified. "The review has not identified any cases of concern about the existing LADO's understanding and application of the management of allegations criteria. Feedback forms are being sent to referrer's and of the sample seen the experience has been positive and timely." Positive practice was identified relating to praising young people directly for their courage making allegations. Areas where more work is in place includes educating partners about the LADO role and suggestions to further strengthen the quality of minutes.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

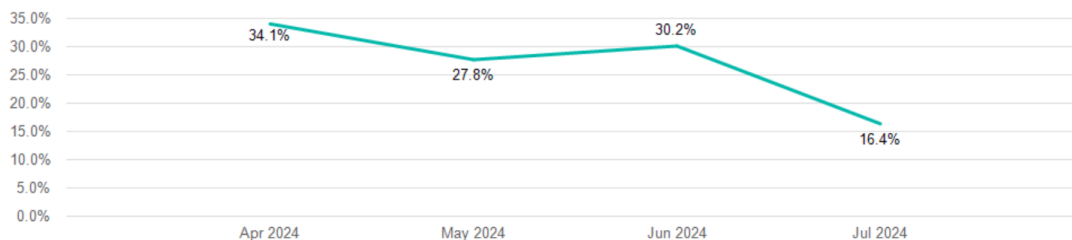
10. We have experienced an increase in UASC accepted into Plymouth through the National Transfer Scheme (15 currently) and would expect this to increase further as our numbers are low compared to the national formula. To improve the experience for and practice with UASC two social workers within the Permanence Service now take the lead in working with UASC. In addition, two Family Support Workers (FSWs) have been recruited dedicated to this work and eight staff have undertaken the recommended age assessment training. Following a visit to Bristol to learn from their practice with UASC we are developing a range of culturally appropriate resources for young people to support them when they first arrive. Partners have improved their offer to UASC as set out in our refocused Corporate Parenting Operational Management Plan, this includes an improved offer from the Virtual School and increasing support to help young people access appropriate community organisations and move on support. We are currently receiving support from our SLIP to evaluate our improvements in this area and quality assurance is planned to report to the September PCIB.

11. In response to feedback from young people around the number of changes in social worker, the impact on building trusting relationships and to improve our practice, the agreed transfer process is now that UASC young people arriving in Plymouth transfer directly to the Permanence Service upon referral.

2. Progress with extending access to Targeted Help for vulnerable children and young people and operating an effective Front Door leading to families receiving the right help at the right time.

12. We have reshaped our Targeted Help offer to continue to increase the interventions in place with families across the Council's Targeted Help Services. The three Targeted Help teams are now closely aligned to the Front Door accepting work directly from the MASH and step outs from Initial Response Teams ensure children and families receive evidence-based interventions that will support improved outcomes and reduce the need for statutory social work and reduce re-referrals. This realignment has already contributed to a reduction in the number of families being progressed for statutory assessment (305 referrals in April to 238 in July) and we expect this approach to support a continued reduction in our re-referral rates as more children and families receive the right support.

Monthly trend (since beginning of year)



Re-referral rates

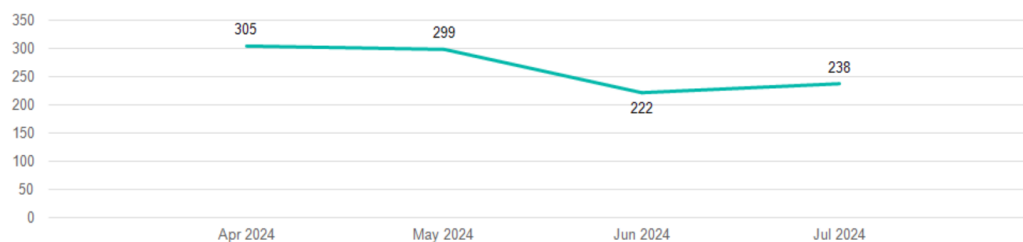
13. We are embedding the Outcomes Star to evaluate the impact of targeted support. Where there is a youth work need the Targeted Help teams can refer to the School Link team to access a youth worker.
14. We have strengthened relationships with partners and pathways between early help, targeted support and statutory services by basing teams in the MASH and providing the Early Help Line from within the MASH.
15. Our Edge of Care offer continues to be effective. In the first six months of the year (1st January – 30 June), 102 children came into the care of the Local Authority. Seven (6%) of these children were supported by the Edge of Care Team. Five of these children presented as homeless (16-17 years old) and were accommodated under s20 – one has now returned to his family network. The other two are under 16 and were referred due to a breakdown in relationships. One has successfully been reunited and the other is being supported to return to her family within the next three months.
16. Ten audits were completed in the service in July and 10% were found to be 'outstanding', 40% 'good' and 50% 'requiring improvement'. This evidenced that practitioners worked really hard to build relationships with families and have a good understanding of risk to ensure that this is managed effectively, including by working openly with families. The service is working well with partners and is creating an approach, focused on achieving the end goal for the family rather than the process.
17. Planned next steps include ensuring Family Networks Meetings are held routinely, ensuring fathers are always included and ensuring the voice of non-verbal children is evidenced well. We are also offering assessment and evidence-based parenting interventions to families open within the statutory service and an offer to improve the reunification of children with care as a permanence plan to return to their birth families when things change.
18. We are extending the use of family led decision making approaches including family network meetings and Family Group Conferencing (FGC) so that more families are offered a family led support plan

when they first need help. Detailed practice guidance for Family Network Meetings is in place and briefings are being held for all teams, delivered by our Family and Community Solutions Team who deliver our FGC offer, to ensure that family capacity is fully utilised in all cases, particularly where there is a risk of the child coming into care.

Front Door

19. We have sustained improvements in the delivery of a timely response by the Front Door, the appropriate application of consent and thresholds and are further developing the Front Door as a single point of entry to both targeted and specialist services to ensure families receive the right help at the right time. We continue to see a reduction in referrals as a result of the impact of early and targeted help.

Monthly trend (since beginning of year)



Referrals by month

20. As a result, the volume of assessments completed by the service has also reduced. The timeliness of assessments is still not yet where we want it to be, at the end of July 63.9% had been completed within 45 days in year. This has had strong focus over the summer under the direction of a new Service Manager and on 31st July 91% of open assessments were in time (30 were over 45 days) which will lead to improving performance in coming months. 87% of children are seen within our 10 day timescale.
21. Strategic and Operational MASH Boards continue to ensure strong partnership engagement and oversight of practice and in the analysis of and response to patterns of demand and performance and quality assurance that drives improvement priorities. This includes a programme of partnership dip sampling of priority areas including consent and strategy meetings which is finding appropriate decision making.
- 3. Timely and effective social work practice when it is needed which keeps children and young people safe and improves wider outcomes.**

All children benefit from a timely and comprehensive assessment

22. At the start of the year the Academy commenced the delivery of a refreshed 'Assessment Fundamentals' programme to all social workers and team managers across the service, prioritised to our Initial Response Teams, to reset expectations on what good practice looks like. As of end July 78 staff had attended and 34 more were booked on further courses through the autumn and all will attend this year.
23. Service meetings across service areas have been reviewing the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership (PSCP) toolkits on neglect, child sexual abuse, domestic abuse and adolescent safety to embed these new toolkits and guidance.
24. Quality assurance has identified some improvements to the quality of assessments completed. However, in May only 33% were 'good', 61% 'required improvement' and one assessment was found to be inadequate. Some assessments are completed in a timely way, summarise children's

histories well and consider the impact of children's lived experiences upon their needs. Where assessments are written to young people, we have a better understanding of their views.

25. However, assessments that were not yet good are not always informed by the Risk Vulnerability Matrix tool, analytical or comprehensive. Some assessments, particularly within the Initial Response Service are delayed so that children's needs and the plan of support is not identified in a timely way. Assessments do not always consider the impact of support upon a child's lived experiences, what difference this has made and what is the likelihood of sustained change.
26. Quality assurance activity identified that child sexual abuse practice is not yet consistently strong and as a result the Initial Response and Children's Social Work services are implementing a focused approach to build confidence in our team managers and social workers and strengthen risk assessments and safety planning including ensuring the toolkit developed by the PSCP is well embedded.
27. Managers have been ensuring assessments are routinely shared with families and children and this will be reviewed by IROs in reviews and as part of our Practice Week in November.

All children and young people benefit from high quality planning

28. It is a strength that 95% of children in care have an up to date plan, but there is more to do to ensure all children we are working with have a high-quality plan that ensures the work that is needed progresses and brings about the changes that are needed in a timely way. In May, audit work found 22% of plans to be 'good', 72% 'required improvement' and one was found to be 'inadequate' which was addressed immediately. Plans are not yet consistently SMART, bespoke to individual children's needs and focused on supporting professionals to bring about the changes needed.
29. To improve consistency in the quality of planning for children, from September the Academy will be commencing a redesigned Planning training offer for all social workers and managers and the expectation is that 100% will attend this this year.
30. We have had a particular focus on planning for children in need, and as a result of implementing tracking meetings by Service Managers there has been a reduction in the number of children in need open more than 12 months to 12% (110 children). In addition, following the implementation of the new Pathway Planning format developed with young people and development sessions held in all teams on practice standards for Pathway Plans, it is a priority to ensure all young people have an up to date and ambitious Pathway Plan that has been developed with them. As of the end of July 60% of all eligible young people had an up to date Pathway Plan and we are on track for 100% of care leavers under 18 and 95% of care leavers over 18 having an up to date Pathway Plan by December. Audit work is planned in October to review the quality of updated plans.
31. Over the summer we have been working with our SLIP to improve the impact of our Independent Reviewing Service on the quality of planning with a positive joint development session held with Dorset colleagues and quality assurance work planned to report to the September PCIB.

All children and young people benefit from purposeful direct work

32. There are a range of direct work approaches and tools for children and young people of different ages and developmental stages being utilised across the service. The Academy has started work to bring these together and develop a resource bank. Ensuring direct work and life story work is completed and recorded on Eclipse remains a focus and will be included in work on permanence planned with our SLIP in the Autumn with our own quality assurance planned in December.

Strengthened relationship based practice

33. Caseloads across the service have been sustained within target levels and the reduction experienced in the Initial Response Service will impact on other service areas over coming months.

Service Area	Caseload Average March	Range March	Caseload average July	Range July
Initial Response Service	30.6	5-46	18.2	2-27
Children’s Social Work Service	17.9	1-28	17.6	2-27
Children’s Disability Service	24	7-30	22.9	12-33
Permanence Service	17.4	11-22	16.5	6-22
Care Leavers	29.5	6-35	23.3	5-30
Fostering Service	17.5	3-38	18	6-35
Safeguarding Service (Independent Chairs)	76.6	54-91	77.8	55-91

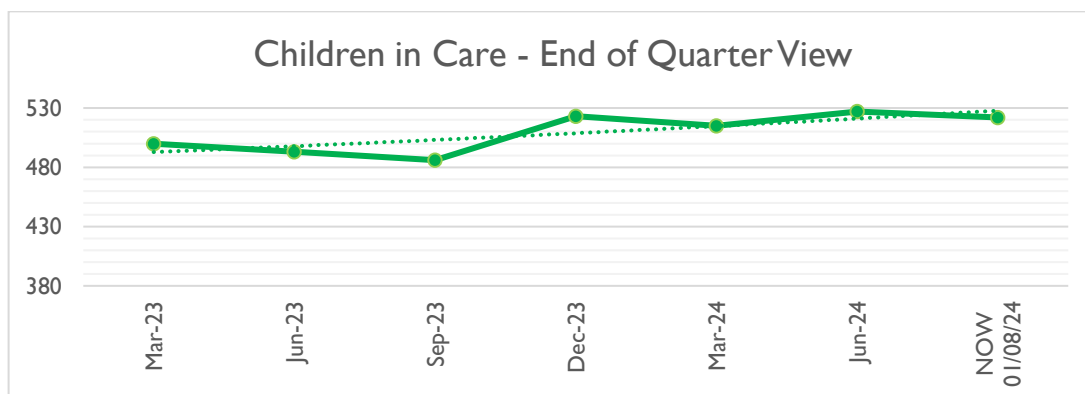
Caseloads

34. Team Managers ensure children transfer between service areas in a timely way and we have made a number of changes to reduce the moves for families (e.g. for UASC and where pre-birth assessments are needed).
35. Audit work is identifying evidence of relationship-based practice. In May, audits identified 71% of families were well involved in the assessment and work undertaken, 12% were ‘outstanding’, and 20% ‘required improvement’. Visits to and assessments of cared for children were noted as well written to children and young people clearly evidencing their wishes and feelings and evidencing that we know our cared for children well.
36. Despite efforts to recruit permanent social workers, we continue to experience turnover of social workers impacting on relationships with children and families.

4. Good experiences and progress for all children in care

Earlier permanence planning

37. The number of children in care continued to rise through last year but has stayed more stable in recent months. This includes 36 children who are part of large sibling groups who came into our care between January and May as a result of serious neglect and family complexities including parental substance misuse and mental health.



38. Since January, 112 children have come into care and whilst 10 have already returned home and a further, 10 children have been identified as being likely to remain in our care, 47 children currently have a plan to be returned home once the required changes are achieved within the family.
39. The increase in numbers of children coming into care has been compounded by a delay in final hearing dates for children subject to legal care proceedings. The national target for care proceedings is 26 weeks but we currently have 78 children who are over 50 weeks. We are working closely with the local judiciary to get final hearing dates scheduled so that decisions (including adoption decisions) can be made for these children.
40. Since the ILACs, we have strengthened our internal tracking to ensure children in long term fostering are matched with their carers more quickly and are currently working with our SLIP to ensure all children benefit from appropriate and early permanence planning. This includes all children who are Placed with Parents and to identify where Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and reunification should be explored. Some young people at home under Placement with Parents Regulations were identified where discharge proceedings had been delayed and as a result legal planning meetings were held in respect of those children and plans to progress put in place. Two of these children had their Care Orders discharged in September and December 2023. A joint learning event for our staff on permanence and stability is being planned with Dorset in October and dip sampling of the IRO oversight of permanence is being completed to report to the Sept Board.

Education and health outcomes for children in care

41. We are working closely with Health partners to ensure the physical, emotional and mental health needs of our children in care are well met. In March, as a result of an accelerated improvement plan agreed by health and social care with oversight from the Corporate Parenting Group, 83.3% of Initial Health Assessments were completed within 20 working days of the child coming into care. However, in July only 1 initial health assessment was completed on time and we are currently working closely with our Health colleagues to consistently achieve better performance.
42. The Virtual School (VS) has a focused plan in place to improve the educational outcomes for children in care and care experienced young people. Three additional staff have been recruited as 4-16 Education Advocates to allow caseloads to reduce from nearly 200 to around 80. The PEP Officer has implemented a quality assurance system for Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and training is being delivered to schools, social workers and carers to ensure that children in care have enhanced educational support from their carers and corporate parent.
43. In the Spring term of 2024, PEPs increased in quality from 57% to 75% being identified as 'good'. We are further improving the consistency in the quality of PEPs including the PEP QA procedures being updated to better reflect the use of strengths-based language and ensuring they are written directly to children and young people, inclusion of genuinely SMART targets that are reviewed and represent efficient use of the pupil premium. Training is being undertaken with Designated Teachers where PEPs are not yet good. This will lead to an expected increase in the percentage of PEPs found to be 'outstanding' in the autumn term 2024.
44. We are tracking the attendance of children in care on a monthly basis and there is a specific focus on severe, persistent absence and the use of part-time timetables. In addition, the group of approximately eight (at any one time) children without an educational place remain the focus of regular planning in order to secure provision that meets need. We remain concerned about the children under 16 who have no school place, either because they have had multiple and rapid moves of care placement or because there is a lack of suitable SEND placements locally or nationally. We are addressing this in our placement and SEND sufficiency work.

5. Ambition for care leavers and good outcomes

45. Our Corporate Parenting arrangements have set out improved ambition and approaches for care leavers to be in education, employment and training. The Virtual School Funded Skills Launchpad

have appointed an Outreach Officer to work with entrenched NEET since 1st April '24. To date the post-holder has engaged 9 students and met individually with all 18. The post-16 PEP format was revised in March '24 to include Post 16 planning from Y10 and impact is expected in the autumn term when an assessment of pupils' remaining in EET is made.

46. The combined EET (IN Education Employment or Training) figure is currently 60%, which is 9% lower than regional average, although our rate of keeping track of care leavers is better than regional. There are currently 18 children in care who are entrenched NEET with long standing and complex needs as barriers to engagement including 2 having a criminal record and 16 with an EHCP. Two Children in Care are young mothers and are currently focusing on being a good parent to their children. Post 16 Caseworkers and 11-18 Consultant are working collaboratively with partners and the Post 16 Team to plan individually for pupils through inclusion of career/post 16 planning in PEPs from Y10. Post 16 caseworkers and 11-18 consultant are focused on improving attendance and engagement monitoring to feed from July '24, focusing on NEET to EET changes, attendance in education, employment or training provision, engagement in tutoring.
47. Through partnership tracking of individual children, we have increased the proportion of 18+ care leavers who are now seeking education, employment and training and young people in Y12 and 13 in EET has increased by 3.7% since May 2024.
48. The Skills Launchpad Youth Hub has completed 101 interventions with care experienced young people which has supported 28 young people into paid work, 49 young people into training or education and completed 84 pre-employment interventions. Funding has been secured to appoint a youth hub worker and a youth outreach worker who will provide personalised support and early intervention to ensure smooth transitions and maintain EET for care experienced and young people with SEND. A Youth Work Apprentice position was recruited to in the Care Leavers Team in May 2023, working across the Care Leavers and Participation Teams.
49. We are now guaranteeing all young people an interview and work experience and have launched the Livewell employability pathway for all identified care leavers who are NEET.
50. In response to Ofsted findings about access to suitable accommodation the process for automatic access to Band B of Devon Home Choice has been implemented for all care leavers and care leavers are being prioritized in new housing developments. In addition, we are developing a local offer and welfare pack for young people leaving custody and quality assurance of this area is planned in October.

Support and preparation for adulthood

51. 88% of young people with SEND are in education, training or employment. The Service Director Education, Participation and Skills has strengthened leadership of the improvements to preparing for adulthood by establishing a multi-agency working group to scope, plan, deliver and communicate the vision and changes required in this area. A transitions framework and preparing for adulthood guidance is in place to coordinate transitions from early years to post-16. Whilst there is evidence of some excellent work occurring within the local area, such as the Youth Hub Contract supporting young people into employment, Family Hub work within Early Years Transitions and the work of the Changing Futures three-year programme, this is not consistent. Local service and user journey mapping is being undertaken to identify the performance and outcomes metrics that exist across the system.
52. Transitions into adult mental health services, adult social care and universal health services for Care Leavers has been a priority focus for the Corporate Parenting Operational Managers Group over the last 6 months. Transitions Pathways have been implemented and guidance circulated to ensure earlier alerts and improved transitions. Young people have reviewed these pathways and will provide some practice guidance to staff alongside the launch of the Local Offer. Improving transitions for all children in care will include training of carers in supporting young people to

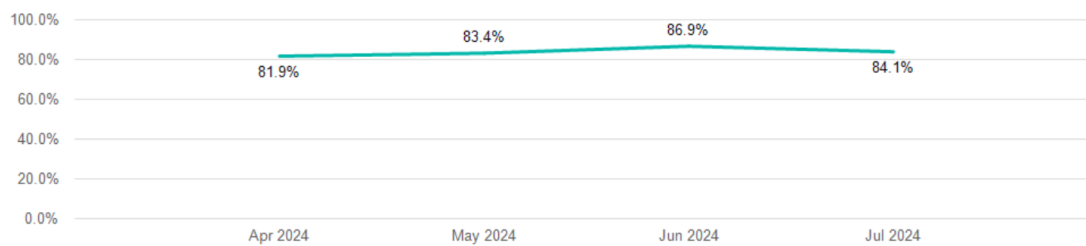
prepare for independence and developing and embedding transitions pathways that are accessible for young people and the staff supporting them.

6. Leadership and management

53. We launched a new recruitment webpage in January with new materials including videos of our DCS, senior managers and frontline staff talking about Plymouth as a great place to live and work. We are also utilising LinkedIn to support recruitment of management posts. Despite this, we continue to find it extremely challenging to recruit experienced social workers and have appointed four permanent qualified social workers, three Team Managers and two Independent Reviewing Officers so far this calendar year. The rate of permanent social work staff leaving Plymouth is currently low and the exit interview process has been strengthened to ensure we learn from all leavers.
54. At the end of June, there was a 25% vacancy rate for staff in permanent roles (53 social worker vacancies within 209 social worker posts, this is above the national vacancy rate in 2023). Particular issues can be seen in the following teams:
- MASH, OOH & Initial Response Service, 49 SW posts & 21 SW vacancies (42.86%)
- 18 of the vacancies (85.7%) are currently filled by Agency workers.
 - 6 of the vacancies (28.57%) are management roles.
- Children's Social Work, 77 SW posts & 21 SW vacancies (27.27%)
- 18 of the SW vacancies (85.7%) are currently filled by Agency workers.
 - 3 of the SW vacancies (14.3%) are management roles.
- Permanence, 50 SW posts & 10 SW vacancies (20%)
- 6 of the SW vacancies (60%) are currently filled by Agency workers.
 - 1 of the SW vacancies is a management role (Agency) covering long-term sickness.
55. Twelve social workers are NQSWs completing their ASYE in September when a further 8 ASYEs will join the service, and 12 SWs were recruited internationally within the past year. Our recent successes in SW recruitment have largely been of those with limited or no post qualifying experience which has impacted on capacity in the system to case hold families with more complex needs.
56. In addition to a new recruitment campaign, work to improve stability in the workforce through improved retention has included introducing a refreshed learning and development offer from the Academy, a review of our career progression framework and strengthening our approach to induction. Social Workers with four years post qualifying experience will now have the opportunity to progress to Advanced Practitioner (AP) and our Principal Social Worker will support our APs to achieve the expectations of their role.
57. Between April and July we delivered a well-attended bespoke management and leadership development programme for all of our managers and aspiring managers covering core skills and knowledge to develop a high performing workforce. A longer-term Service Manager and Head of Service development programme involving coaching, action learning and group learning sessions, will commence in September and be delivered over the following 12-18 months to develop manager's skills across operational and strategic management and to support the development of a high performing workforce in line with our 'High Expectation, High Support, High Challenge' culture.
58. We are continuing our Leaders for Excellence management development offer for all Team Managers and above in Education and social care with a programme for the autumn including financial management, use of data to drive improvement, supervision skills, change management and managing diversity.

59. Our supervision performance improved through the year but remains variable across the service and this continues to be a priority in service performance meetings and quality assurance.

Monthly trend (since beginning of year)



Completion of supervision - all Children, Young People and Families Service

60. **A recent audit of supervision practice found that;** whilst supervision was taking place regularly for most children the quality of recording and the evidence of reflective discussion was more limited. Recordings were often very brief and do not always give a clear overview of the child's current circumstances or contain SMART actions to prevent drift and delay. This is a current priority for all service areas and focused improvement plans are in place in priority areas including leaving care teams. This has been a focus at our 'Leaders for Excellence' sessions in order to develop more confident approaches to ensure managers have effective 'line of sight' of progress of practice in their area and a supervision 'masterclass' is being planned, as part of our leadership and management development programme, to develop managers confidence and consistency in approach in a proportionate approach to supervision practice and recording, alongside planned coaching and increased management observation of supervision.
61. Stabilising our senior leadership and management team continues to be a priority with active recruitment underway to key posts.

7. Plans for the next quarter

62. Priorities include;

- Maintaining momentum on our practitioner development programme (assessment, planning and direct work).
- Moving into phase 2 of our leadership and management development programme for service managers and heads of service to develop their skills and confidence in leading service improvement and a high performing workforce.
- Our Leaders for Excellence programme sustaining TM development, including continued focus on supervision and management oversight.
- Embedding our Front Door development and refocused Targeted Help offer to ensure families get the right help at the right time.
- Evidencing the impact on Family Network Meetings.
- Implementing the preferred option to reshape our out of hours offer and recruiting the staff needed.
- Responding to findings from quality assurance, in particular to strengthen CSA practice.
- Evaluating the quality and impact of Pathway Plans.
- Continuing a strong focus on social work recruitment and retention.

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	Family Homes for Plymouth Children
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Temi Salimon (Service Director for CYPF)
Contact Email:	Temi.salimon@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report provides a progress report on the programme that has been established to transform our practices with children who are at risk of coming into care and to improve practice, placement sufficiency and outcomes for children and young people to ensure more children in care are looked after in family homes close to Plymouth.

Recommendations and Reasons

- I. It is recommended that the programme is noted.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- I. None

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Keeping children and adults in Plymouth safe.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Placement costs currently create a significant financial pressure for the Council.

Financial Risks

Placement costs currently create a significant financial pressure for the Council.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The programme is designed to keep children safe in family settings, or other settings when this is required, close to Plymouth.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
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Sign off:

Fin	Click here to enter text.	Leg	Click here to enter text.	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Assets	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Haley											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 27/09/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Laing approved via email Date approved: 27/09/2024											

1. Introduction

This programme has been established to transform our practices with children who are at risk of coming into care and to improve practice, placement sufficiency and outcomes for children and young people when they do need to be in our care because they cannot be safeguarded in their own family and friends' network.

The Local Authority's Sufficiency Duty, as set out in the Children Act 1989, requires the provision of the right number and types of placements, at the right time, to meet the needs of children in care. This can include adoption, fostering, residential, support for young people in the community, secure accommodation and specialist mental health placements. In Plymouth we are not currently meeting this duty.

To enable attachments to form and to support healthy development, we believe that children and young people in care should grow up in a family setting with foster carers. Exceptionally, residential children's homes can be appropriate for highly traumatised children or older young people who struggle to manage relationships and behaviours in a family home and those with the most complex needs. Residential children's homes can enable a young person to make progress with their emotional and behavioural needs in order to enable a planned move back into a family setting.

Plymouth City Council is committed to placing children in care in settings that are as close as possible to their home area to enable them to maintain family and friendship relationships (where positive), access their social worker, maintain their school placements and access local health and therapeutic services, to support good outcomes. This also enables a more supported and local transition to independence.

A growth in demand has been seen in relation to children and young people in care with complex needs and high risk-taking behaviour as a result of experiences of childhood neglect, trauma and disrupted attachments that have gone unmet. In addition, these children often have additional communication needs and have become disengaged from education.

Whilst we are making progress in increasing the number of children placed with our own foster carers, over recent years a lack of in-house fostering growth in line with demand has led to a higher proportion of Plymouth children being looked after with Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) carers. IFAs have also struggled to recruit sufficient carers to meet the needs of children in care in recent years and a lack of fostering growth overall has led to an overuse of residential care for some children and young people and consequently resulted in a small number of children being in unregulated settings. We have not been ambitious enough for all children placed in residential care to ensure they move back to families in a timely way leading to a net increase over time in the number of children in residential care impacting on outcomes for these children and a significant cost pressure for PCC.

PCC has become reliant on the independent sector for a significant volume of fostering and residential provision. At the same time, the independent sector has demonstrated that it is not able to provide sufficient high-quality and value for money placements to meet the needs of our young people.

2. Context Analysis

The impact of generational neglect, mental health issues, alcohol/substance misuse, and poverty in Plymouth has significantly increased the demand for children's services. We have made investments in early help and are beginning to see positive impacts from this. However, there are still families that are harder to reach, with multi-generational patterns leading to complex needs for children. Some of these children have required intensive support and planning to keep them safe, which has resulted in them becoming looked after. For children with very complex issues, higher cost experienced foster carers and needed. In some instances, a period in residential care have been necessary to ensure their safety.

Residential care is never our long-term solution for a child, we want children to grow up in a family in Plymouth, but for some of our complex children, it has been necessary to keep them safe.

The complexity and cost of current placements have posed challenges. Many of the children were already in high-cost, complex placements at the time of our initial forecasting. Their needs have continued to

become more complex despite our best forecasting and wrap-around support. As a result, some children have had to be moved to more costly provisions that can respond to their needs.

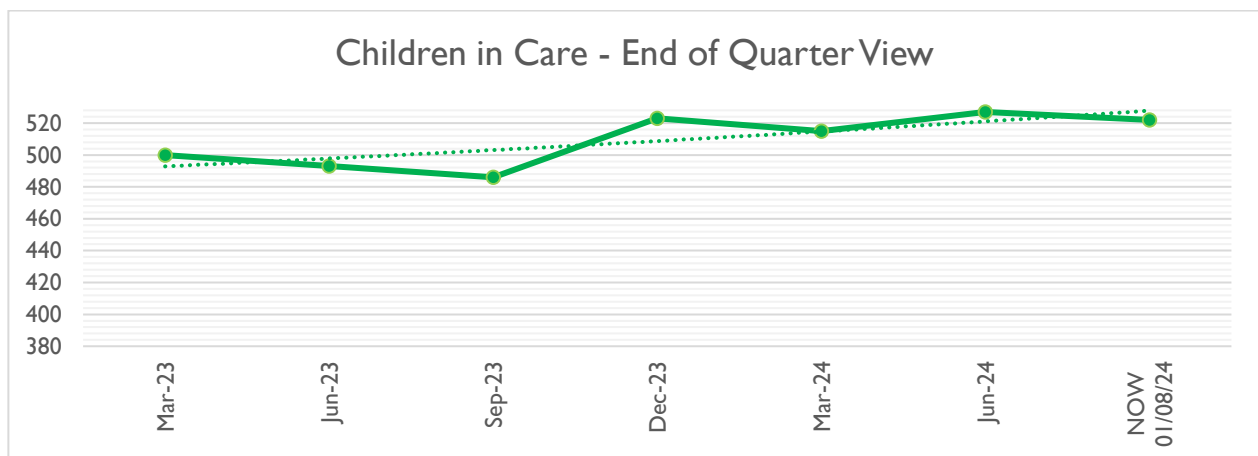
There are real demand/market challenges with residential providers, this is a business for providers we have had to respond to their market supplements, increased packages whilst we have forecasted these are independent business and this can change/fluctuate. Factors such as the national increase in numbers of children in care, market failure and the impact of increased regulation have impacted on the independent sectors ability to meet sufficiency. These providers know for our children we have no other choice but to use them. We are building our brokerage and commissioning relationships to strengthen our approach and challenge this.

We are currently on a three-year improvement journey, with efforts focused on changing cultural and old practices to enhance the effectiveness and throughput and improve outcomes and life chances for our children and young people.

While we have made progress, particularly in the first year, the full benefits of these changes will take time to materialize.

3. Needs Analysis

The number of children in care continued to rise through last year but has stayed more stable in recent months.



As a result of some delayed decision making in our MASH which was identified last summer, there were a high volume (360) of delayed assessments in our Initial Response Teams during the autumn of 2023. These assessments were completed by January 2024. The level of need for the families in this cohort who were waiting for their assessments to be completed was underestimated and as a result of this we currently have 30 additional children in care at this point in the year than budgets were set for. This includes 36 children who are part of large sibling groups who came into our care between January and May as a result of serious neglect and family complexities including parental substance misuse and mental health. The cost of care for these children creates a significant financial pressure in 2024/25.

Since January, 112 children have come into care and whilst 10 have already returned home this had led to the number of children in care in our Children's Social Work Service rising from 157 children in January to 155 currently. At this point in time 10 have been identified as being likely to remain in our care and this number may rise as assessments are completed. 47 children currently have a plan to be returned home once the required changes are achieved within the family.

The increase in numbers of children coming into care has been compounded by a delay in final hearing dates for children subject to legal care proceedings. The national target for care proceedings is 26 weeks but we currently have 78 children who are over 50 weeks. We are working closely with the local judiciary to get final hearing dates scheduled so that decisions (including adoption decisions) can be made for these children.

4. Cost Pressures

In addition to the volume pressure highlighted above, the current financial pressure has been compounded by an increasing cost pressure in our children's placements.

As a result of their changed circumstances and an increase in the complexity of their needs, a number of children who were in care in September 2023 experienced unexpected placement moves increasing the cost of their care. Several of these children moved from already high-cost placements (£5,800 per week) to very high-cost placements (£11,000 per week). This increased the placement spend significantly. When the modelling work was undertaken the average cost of residential care was £5,848 p/week, it is now £6,182 p/week as a result of a further deterioration in sufficiency locally and nationally.

We continue to be very challenged with placement sufficiency, experiencing a shortage of both fostering and residential provision. Whilst we have recently achieved an increase in fostering recruitment activity this is behind where we projected it would be. This has impacted so that we have a higher than projected number of children in residential placements, including some young children. Many of these children are ready to step back into families however foster families are not available for them.

In addition, there are a significant cohort of children who are in high-cost residential care when this is not their plan. Of our children currently in mainstream residential care;

- One is 6 years old.
- Eight are 10/11 years old.
- Sixteen are 12/13 years old.
- Eighteen are 14/15 years old.
- Seven are 16 years old.

It is much harder to step older children who have experienced trauma and disrupted attachments into family care. We need to ensure these children are supported to move into foster homes at the right time, or into 16+ semi-independence provision where this is more suited to their needs.

As a result of increased numbers of children in care, increased complexity of need and worsening sufficiency we have also seen an increase in the number of children placed in unregulated settings (not registered by Ofsted). 9 children are currently placed in unregulated settings at an average weekly rate of £12,376 – 2 of which have been costing the Authority over £40k p/week and with a total annual forecast spend of £5.808m.

5. Programme Objectives

There are two dynamics in the system. Firstly, we need to ensure that the right children are in care by ensuring effective support is provided to families when problems emerge to enable children to remain within their families and where children cannot be safely cared for at home ensure that all alternative arrangements within their extended family and friends network are explored.

Secondly, when children cannot remain safely within their family and friends network, we need to be able to provide a care placement which enables the needs identified in the child's care plan to be well met which for the majority is to be in a family home. Failure to place a child in the right placement often results in the child failing to make good progress, placement breakdown and/or manifestations of distress in the child.

Our programme of work to ensure children in care have a home that meets their needs and that children grow up in families wherever possible is called 'Family Homes for Plymouth Children.' It has several elements:

- Improving practice to keep more children at home and utilising family options when children do need alternative care, including further developing the use of family led decision making models to build family capacity so that children can remain cared for within their friends and family network.
- Recruiting more foster carers for our in-house fostering service, 'Foster for Plymouth' and supporting more of our carers to be able to look after children with more complex needs or challenging behaviours.

- Using an evidence-based approach to 'STEP' agreed children from residential settings to foster placements in a timely, managed and supported way.
- Growing the local independent sector market for both residential and foster care.
- PCC considering becoming a direct provider of residential care.
- Strengthening our brokerage function so we maximise our capacity to identify the right placement at the right price for all children from when they first come into care.
- Supporting children who have been in care for some time to be reunified with their families when it is identified that there have been significant changes in the family.
- Ensuring we are getting value for money from our placement spend.
- Maximising contributions from partners for eligible children with more complex needs.



6. Key Milestones

6a. Foster for Plymouth Growth

So that more of our children in care can live with our foster carers close to Plymouth, we are:

- Introducing an improved offer for our foster carers based on what our foster carers told us at the 2024 Foster Carer Summit. The offer covers both financial and practical support alongside practice improvement work for our workforce which foster carers will be part of delivering.
- Ramping up our marketing and recruitment work to attract new carers, including being part of the South West Regional Hub and having an increased presence with community groups, faith groups, businesses and partners across Plymouth to widen the understanding of fostering and encourage applications to foster from diverse experiences and communities.
- Improving our support to carers to enable them to care for children with more complex needs, including those stepping out of residential, including through introducing a 'Mockingbird' model of support, emergency foster care model and a model for the bespoke package of support for young people stepping out of residential.
- Planning an annual Foster Carer Summit to uphold our commitment to review the support and retention offer regularly with our foster carers.

6b. Market development

To improve the range of high-quality residential placements and foster care closer to Plymouth we are:

- Strengthening how we work with fostering and residential providers in the region and elsewhere, in line with the objectives set out in our Sufficiency Strategy to support them to develop more provision in Plymouth.
- Improving our brokerage capacity so that we maximise available placements local to Plymouth for our looked after children.
- Looking at options for Plymouth City Council to become a provider of residential care across a number of types of provision including short breaks for disabled children, short term intervention to return young people back home and longer term residential children's homes for children with complex needs.

6c. STEPPing children from residential care to family settings

So that we realise our commitment to children growing up in families, we are:

- Utilising the evidence-based BERRI Tool (which evaluates children's needs by understanding behaviour, emotional wellbeing, risk to self and others, relationships and Indicators of psychiatric or neurodevelopmental conditions) to inform our assessments and identify children and young people who are ready to step out of residential care into family settings and to ensure that this happens a timely way.
- Meeting weekly as a management team, alongside the weekly Children's Resource Panels, to review progress of the identified children and young people, review any children or young people who have moved into residential and review the circumstances of those previously not deemed ready to step out so as to ensure that the searches for family based care happens without delay.
- Ensuring our care planning for children supports children to be cared for in a family home.
- For our older young people who are in residential children's homes, this includes consideration of moving into supported accommodation to prepare for independence or focus on a transition to adult services.

6d. Reunifying children with their birth families and wider networks

To ensure we identify opportunities for children to return to their birth families when they have been in our care for some time and this can be achieved safely, we are:

- Supporting children to maintain lifelong links with their birth families.
- Making sure that we continuously review changes in children's circumstances that may make reunification possible.
- Refocusing our Targeted Help offer to provide intensive assessment and support to enable more children to return home from care to their birth families.

6e. Value for money from our placement spend

To ensure we are getting value for money from what we spend on placements for children in care we are;

- Reviewing all high cost packages to ensure children need and are benefitting all elements of the care plan that is being funded for them.
- Ensuring we maximise contributions from partners for eligible children and young people with complex health and education needs.

7. Programme outcomes

The planned outcomes of the programme are;

- Fewer children will be in care.

- More children will be looked after by kinship of connected carers.
- More children will be looked after in foster care, and a higher proportion of children in foster care will be in placements provided by Foster for Plymouth.
- Fewer children will be looked after in residential settings and when they do need to be this will be time limited to achieve specific outcomes which support a child to move into a family setting.
- Children will be provided with the right setting to meet their need from when they first come into care leading to improved placement stability.
- Children will be looked after close to Plymouth.
- The average cost of care will reduce.

The following relates to exempt or confidential matters (Para(s) 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Govt Act 1972). Any breach of confidentiality could prejudice the Council/person/body concerned & might amount to a breach of the councillors /employees codes of conduct.

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Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	QI 2024/25 Performance Report
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture, Events and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Paul Stephens & Susan London
Contact Email:	paul.stephens@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	PSCSS-2024/25(QI)
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To share key performance data information related to Children Services (Children, Young People and Family Services and Education, Participation and Skills)

Recommendations and Reasons

To note the attached briefing paper for information and discussion

Alternative options considered and rejected

Not applicable

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Not applicable

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

For information

Financial Risks

Not applicable

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Not applicable

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

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Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

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		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

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Sign off:

Fin	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Haley											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 02/10/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Laing & Cllr Cresswell via email											
Date approved: 27/09/2024											

QI 2024/25 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

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I. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY SERVICES

I.1. REFERRALS & RE-REFERRALS

Ref	Indicator Name	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
				2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q1 2024/25
1	Number of referrals received within the last 12 months	3,285	2,415	3,961	544.5 (2022/23)	739.1 (2022/23)	4,067
	Referrals received within the last 12 months - Rate per 10,000 children	616.4	467.7	762.4			782.8
2	Number of re-referrals within 12 months (last 12 months)	743	483	821	22.4% (2022/23)	24.3% (2022/23)	942
	% of re-referrals within 12 months (last 12 months)	22.6%	20.0%	20.7%			23.2%

In the 12 months to the end of quarter one, Plymouth progressed 4,067 referrals, this is 106 more than the 12 months to March 2023 and 1,652 more than the 12 months to March 2022. At a rate per 10,000 children (enabling comparisons against other authorities) Plymouth is reported at 782.8 at the end of quarter one. This is higher than Plymouth's published position for 2022/23 (467.7), higher than the statistical neighbour average of 739.1, and higher than the England average of 544.5.

The proportion of re-referrals received (where a referral had been received for the same child in the 12 months prior) has seen an increase (up 2.5pp) in the last quarter. The end of quarter one position was reported at 23.2%, up 3.2 percentage points from Plymouth's published figure for 2022/23.

Plymouth is currently at a level lower than the 2022/23 published levels for both its statistical neighbours and the England average.

During the quarter under review, we have seen a decrease in the number of contacts progressing to assessment at the front door, attributed to the rigor and collaborative efforts with colleagues from Targeted Help and partner agencies within the MASH. Plans are in progress to involve more partner agencies in the MASH HUB, aiming for expedited and well-informed decision-making regarding contacts and ensuring timely intervention and support for children and their families. Though early in the process, we are pleased with the significant reduction in caseload and will continue to provide relevant training and workshops to enhance the skill set of MASH staff, ultimately leading to a safer and more effective service for children and families.

On a more related note, although there has been a slight increase in our re-referral rate as previously mentioned, Plymouth's overall re-referral rate remains below that of our statistical neighbours and the England average. We are committed to maintaining a low re-referral rate, indicating that prior interventions have successfully brought about sustained change and improvement for our families. As a learning organization, we will persist in reviewing and monitoring these cohorts and ensuring the appropriate application of thresholds and services. Additionally, we will continue to learn from family history and chronology to better inform our assessments and planning.

1.2. CHILDREN IN NEED

1.2. CHILDREN IN NEED				Previous Year & Benchmarking		Current Period	
Ref	Indicator Name	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q1 2024/25
3	Number of children subject to a Child In Need Plan (snapshot)	965	944	1,379	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	1,070
	Children subject to a Child In Need Plan - Rate per 10,000 children	181.1	177.1	265.4	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	205.9

Quarter one has seen a decrease in Plymouth's 'Child in Need' caseload (which does not include children subject to Children Protection Plans or Looked after Children) and returns to a level comparable to the end of 2021/22 and 2022/23 positions.

As a result of the practice improvement work across the department we have seen a decrease in the number of children open in the department under a Child in Need plan, this is as a result of the practice improvement work being undertaken and the close scrutiny of plans by senior management.

We know that children may need support and through early intervention could avoid coming into statutory services. There is a workstream that has been developed with partners to identify a clear pathway for families who can easily access early help and targeted early help without requiring social work intervention. We have started to see this in the volume of referral and subsequent assessments, which is really positive for families as we would want to ensure they receive the least intrusive interventions where possible.

The children social work service has four weekly Child in Need tracker meetings chaired by the service managers to enable reflective discussions and ensure there is no drift and delay around the support and intervention for families. The service continues to embed quality assurance work with specific focus on these four areas of improvement.

1. Assessment
2. Plans
3. Supervision
4. Visits

Training and development continues for all managers. There is a specific management programme which is underway for aspiring team managers, with Heads of Service supporting them to develop the skills and confidence to manage and lead teams. This is alongside the 'Leaders for Excellence' programme.

1.3. CHILDREN SUBJECT TO A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

Ref	Indicator Name	Previous Year & Benchmarking					Current Period
		2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q1 2024/25
4	Number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (Snapshot)	326	230	296	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	338
	Children subject to a Child Protection Plan - Rate per 10,000 children	61.2	44.5	57.0	43.2 (2022/23)	55.9 (2022/23)	65.1
5	Category of abuse for current Child Protection Plan: Neglect	51.5% (168)	45.9% (107)	50.3% (149)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	50.6% (171)
	Category of abuse for current Child Protection Plan: Physical Abuse	7.7% (25)	6.4% (15)	8.4% (25)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	7.1% (24)
	Category of abuse for current Child Protection Plan: Sexual Abuse	3.7% (12)	4.3% (10)	8.4% (25)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	10.4% (35)
	Category of abuse for current Child Protection Plan: Emotional Abuse	37.1% (121)	43.3% (101)	32.8% (97)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	32.0% (108)
6	% of children subject to multiple child protection plans - Within lifetime of the child (new plans starting in last 12 months)	27.5% (103)	25.8% (65)	30.2% (112)	23.6% (2022/23)	24.7% (2022/23)	26.2% (116)

At the end of quarter one (30 June 2024) there were 338 children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan. This is a rate of 65.1 children per 10,000 children, which is higher than the published 2022/23 rate of 44.5 (230 children) and our provisional rate of 57.0 for 2023/24 (296 children). The rate per 10,000 children is currently 213.9 above the England average and 9.2 above our Statistical Neighbour average. We had previously advised the Scrutiny Committee (on 28 February) that we anticipated that the number of children on Child Protection Plans would increase over quarter four of 2023/24 as practice in this area continued to improve. We had anticipated a level of around 285 to 295 children, but were higher than this at 338.

The proportion of children who became subject to a Child Protection Plan within the 12 months up to the end of quarter one (July 2023 to June 2024), who have been on a previous Child Protection Plan in their lifetime was reported at 26.2% (down 4.0 percentage points). During the last 12 months, 116 children/young people have started repeated Child Protection Plans (within their lifetime), whilst this is a decrease on the end of 2023/24 position, it remains higher than the published 2022/23 statistical neighbours average of 24.7% and the England average of 23.6%.

There is a strong focus on requests for repeat Child Protection Plans with greater oversight by Service Managers. This provides more consistency and further opportunity to have reflective discussions to ensure that the care plan is right for these children, or whether we can work differently with the family.

There is also a strong focus on Child Protection Plans over 12 months, with monthly meetings chaired by the Service Manager for safeguarding who is ensuring that there is grip and timely decisions for children.

The department is working with the Plymouth Safeguarding Partnership Board to roll out the 'NSPCC Neglect Graded Care Profile 2 Assessment Tool' to support all staff and volunteers working across the system to identify and improve support for children and young people who may experience neglect. We are working towards ensuring all staff undertaking assessments have been trained by the end of 2024.

As part of our improvement journey, we are equipping our social workers with a better understanding of the identification of sexual abuse and domestic abuse; this is visible in the information shown above with a shift in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for these reasons.

1.4. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (ALSO REFERRED TO AS CHILDREN IN CARE)				Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
Ref	Indicator Name	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q1 2024/25
7	Number of children subject to a Care Plan - Looked After Children (Snapshot)	490	500	515	71.0 (2022/23)	96.5 (2022/23)	527
	Children subject to a Care Plan - Looked After Children - Rate per 10,000 children	91.9	96.9	99.1			101.4
8	Number of Looked After Children in an unregistered placement (snapshot)	4	6	9	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	9
9	% of Looked After Children placed outside of the city of Plymouth (i.e., the placement is not within PL1 to PL7 or PL9)	38.0% (23% DfE – city boundary)	39.9% (25% DfE – city boundary)	42.7% (220)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	42.3% (223)
10	Placement Type: Family Placement (fostering or connected carers)	325	339	368	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	372
	Placement Type: Children's Homes, Residential Care Homes & Residential Schools	56	57	57	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	55
	Placement Type: Hostels & other Supportive accommodation	33	48	47	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	44
	Placement Type: Lodgings or Independent living (16+)	16	x	x	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	x
	Placement Type: Other Placement	x	5	8	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	9

Placement Type: Placed for Adoption	24	18	5	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	12
Placement Type: Placed with Parents	28	32	26	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	30
Placement Type: Other accommodation - NHS, Family Centres, Parent & Child	7	x	x	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	x
Placement Type: Secure Units & Youth Offender Institutions	x	x	x	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	x

Please note: where the number of children is below five, the actual figure is suppressed and shows 'x'.

On 30 June 2024, there were 527 children/young people who are children in care. This is a net increase of 27 children/young people on the published figure for 2022/23 and 12 more than the provisional figure of 515 for 2023/24. The average month-end position for the last 12 months is calculated at 509 children/young people with the last seven month-end positions being higher than 509. We are working with our SLIP partners in relation to children and young people's long-term matching for permanence to support our improvement work across the children's teams and the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team. We are awaiting the report however have already implemented some joint learning with our SLIP partners with some nominated staff attending workshops in Dorset which they will then deliver to staff in Plymouth around permanence matching and positively impact stable care arrangements.

304 (57.7%) of children in care are placed within the city, the remaining 223 children (42.3%) placed outside of the city. This has decreased slightly compared to the 2023/24 average but is significantly higher than 2021/22 and 2022/23 average, however the percentage of children and young people placed outside of Devon and Cornwall has not significantly changed. This measure is simply based on the postcode of the child's placement address. Those not within PL1 to PL7 or PL9 are considered outside of the city. For example, PL12 refers to Saltash in Cornwall (potentially be less than a mile from a child's home address), but it is outside of Plymouth. Using provisional information, approximately 74.6% of children in care are placed within 20 miles of their home address (393 of 527). 39 children / young people (7.4%) were placed more than 125 miles from their home address.

The number of children and young people in residential settings has reduced slightly compared to the previous year end positions. We continue to work through our STEPS program to identify family-based placements for the cohort of children and young people who are assessed as being ready to move into a family-based placement with careful preparation and matching. Work is progressing with these children, and this is monitored through Children's Resource Panel and our Family Homes for Plymouth's Cared for Children Board. A further cohort of children have been identified for the next phase of the work.

The risks identified in the STEPS work relate to the sufficiency of both 'in house' and Independent Fostering Agency foster placements and the matching of children given some of their complex needs and trauma. Sufficiency of suitable homes for cared for children continues to be an issue locally and nationally. Foster for Plymouth's updated offer to our Foster Carers has been completed to accompany the financial offer. The Regional Fostering Recruitment Hub (South West Fostering) is now live and the implementation of Mockingbird in Plymouth is progressing.

The Special Guardianship Support Team has now been established and the Team Manager is developing the policies and procedures ahead of a launch in quarter two. This will clarify and increase the offer of support to promote stable care arrangements to prevent disruption of these family arrangements and enables prospective Special Guardians to feel confident in caring for a child under a Special Guardianship Order, which in turn should result in increased discharges from care.

1.5. CARE EXPERIENCED (ALSO REFERRED TO AS CARE LEAVERS)

Ref	Indicator Name	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
				2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q1 2024/25
11	% of Care Experienced young people in Unsuitable Accommodation (Statutory Service (aged 18 to 20))	6.1% (111/181) (11% DfE)	4.1% (8/192) (12% DfE)	9.5% (19/201)	12.0% (2022/23 DfE)	11.2% (2022/23 DfE)	11.9% (24/202)
12	% of Care Experienced young people in Education, Employment and Training (Statutory Service (EET aged 18 to 20))	56.4% (102/181) (49% DfE)	50.0% (96/192) (47.0% DfE)	43.3% (87/201)	56.0% (2022/23 DfE)	55.3% (2022/23 DfE)	45.0% (91/202)

Plymouth's quarter one figures show that the proportion of Care Experienced young people in unsuitable accommodation (11.9%) was at a level slightly lower than the England average but above the statistical neighbour average (as published for 2022/23). The cohort of young people in unsuitable accommodation has increased on our locally held figures for the last three-year end positions. Our current position is at similar levels to the England and statistical neighbour averages and this cohort is rigorously reviewed and reported via our internal reporting monthly. There has also been an increase in comparison to the 2921/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The Housing & Preparation for Adulthood meeting continues to meet monthly and monitoring the plans for all care experienced young people aged 16 and 17 to improve transition planning. This has evidenced improved planning and fewer young people requiring extensions to 16+ provisions post 18 due to delayed planning. However there has been several young people over 18 who have moved from suitable to unsuitable accommodation.

Those in Education, Employment and Training were reported at a level circa 10.3 to 11.0 percentage points lower than the 2022/23 published figures for our comparators.

We continue to focus on the cohort of young people recorded as NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) in targeted monthly review meetings which examines each care leaver who is NEET and implementing an individualised action plan through the Skills Launchpad. The focus has initially been on our children in care and care leavers in Year 12 and Year 13 to reduce the number of young people becoming NEET and exacerbating the increase. The work is now shifting towards those aged 18+ who are SEET (Seeking Education, Employment and Training) and NEET.

Work is ongoing to explore and develop opportunities across Plymouth City Council, our partners and the wider community for care experienced young people to access work shadowing, work experience, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities. The fostering recruitment activity with local businesses and communities will also enhance this work.

Please note: The DfE calculation differs from our local figures. We include all care leavers (Qualifying, Relevant & Former Relevant) and use the latest information available for those aged under 21. However, the DfE only include Former Relevant care leavers and use information held around the young person's 19th, 20th or 21st birthday.

2. EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND SKILLS

2.1. OFSTED OUTCOMES

Ref	Indicator Name	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
				2022/23 Actual	England	South West	Q1 2024/25
1	% of all schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding	Inspections paused due to COVID	76.0%	77.6%	89.6% (pub. Dec 2023) 90.3% (End of June report)	86.9% (pub. Dec 2023) 87.0% (End of June report)	90.8% (89/98) End of June position
2	% of pupils attending Plymouth schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding	Inspections paused due to COVID	77.1%	81.0%	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	90.5% (35,625 / 39,407)

There are 98 state-funded schools in Plymouth and at the end of quarter one for 2024/25, 90.8% of schools are judged as Good or Outstanding. This is an improvement of 10.2% compared to the end of the academic year 2022/23, and now 0.5% higher than the National average (90.3%) at the end of June 2024. When we break this figure down into the number of primary, secondary, and special schools judged as Good or better, we can see that there are:

- 2 out of 2 Nurseries (100% compared to 97.4% nationally)
- 65 out of 69 Primary Schools (94.2% compared to 91.6% nationally),
- 16 out of 19 Secondary Schools (84.2% compared to 83.8% nationally), and
- 5 out of 7 Special Schools (71.4% compared to 90.5% nationally).

Overall, 90.5% of pupils are attending a school judged as good or outstanding in our city.

2.2. ABSENCE MONITORING

Ref	Indicator Name	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
				2022/23 Actual	England	South West	Q1 2024/25
3	% of overall absence in all schools	4.9%	8.8%	8.2%	7.4% (Academic Year 2022/23) 6.7% (Autumn Term 2023/24)	7.6% (Academic Year 2022/23) 7.0% (Autumn Term 2023/24)	9.1% (Local data – 01/04/24 to 30/06/24) 7.7% (Autumn Term 2023/24)
4	% of persistent absence (less than 90% attendance) in all schools	12.9%	28.1%	24.1% (Academic Year 23/24) 23.2% (Autumn Term 23/24)	21.2% (Academic year 22/23) 19.4% (Autumn Term 23/24)	21.3% (Academic year 22/23) 20.1% (Autumn Term 23/24)	29.5% (Local data – 01/04/24 to 30/06/24) (Of which 4.4% were severely absent)
5	% of persistent absence (less than 90% attendance) of pupils with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs)	38.8%	45.0%	40.5% (Academic Year 22/23) 38.4% (Autumn Term 23/24)	36.0% (Academic Year 22/23) 34.1% (Autumn Term 23/24)	37.8% (Academic Year 22/23) 36.3% (Autumn Term 23/24)	42.1% (722) (Local data 01/04/24 to 30/06/2024) (Of which 9.4% (161) were severely absent)

The benchmark information provided above is provided from the Department for Education “Pupil absence in schools in England” collection. This is a statutory return completed on a termly basis. The best available report for the three indicators above is the 2022/23 academic year data. There is additional Autumn Term 2023/24 data now published for benchmarks and characteristic data and is also above.

Local unvalidated data for Q1 2024/25 (01/04/2024 to 30/06/2024) for those with an EHCP who are persistently absent currently sits at 42.1%.

Local unvalidated data from the Plymouth Inclusion Scorecard showed for the academic year until the end of June, that:

- Overall absence rate for the 2023/24 up to the end of June 2024 (01/09/2023 to 30/06/2024) was 8.4%.
- The percentage of those persistently absent was 25%
- The percentage of those with an EHCP who were persistently absent was 40.1%.

It is expected that the DfE will publish the validated data for Plymouth and the rest of the country in October 2024.

The Plymouth Inclusion Scorecard indicates that the overall absence rate for the whole 2023/24 academic year which falls within quarter two 2024/25, is likely to sit at 8.2%; that the percentage of those persistently absent will likely sit at 28.3% and that the percentage of those with an EHCP who are persistently absent is likely to sit at 41.9%.

Throughout this academic year our place-based approach has been focused on inclusion, particularly the attendance, mobility and outcomes for children who experience disadvantage. As a result, the Attendance Team Plan has been established, and subsequently presented and approved by the Plymouth Education Board. The ‘Strong Start to September’ campaign has begun and fortnightly contact between Attendance Support Team and schools has been established. Attendance is a key focus for all schools. Multi agency work to support those pupils who are severely absent has been a focus of targeted support meetings which have been held jointly between education and social care early help teams.

The 0-25 SEND Team will begin to attend termly Targeting Support Meetings with Early Help link Officers and Attendance Officers to ensure joint planning in respect of children with EHCPs and absence.

Training is being offered to schools on how to support families to remove barriers to attendance, following local arrangements and service guidelines.

New regulations around penalty notices have been published in order to provide a consistent approach to issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence and to help support Plymouth in reducing rates of avoidable absence.

2.3. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

2.3. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING				Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
Ref	Indicator Name	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q1 2024/25
6	% of 16- and 17-year-olds in Education, Employment and Training	92.1%	91.1%	90.4%	92.5% (Q4 2022/23)	Not benchmarked	93.6%
7	% of 16- and 17-year-olds with SEND in Education, Employment and Training	83.1%	83.2%	81.4%	88.7% (Q4 2022/23)	Not benchmarked	89.1%

At the end of quarter one 2024/25, 93.6% of 16- and 17-year-olds were participating in Education, Employment, and/or Training (EET) and 89.1% of young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities are in education, training and/or employment.

It is important to note that by the end of May 2024, the target of young people with SEND in education, employment and training of 88% had been met. The target will be revised to 92% for the 2024/25 year.

By the end of quarter one, 154 young people had moved from being not in education, employment, and training (NEET) to seeking (SEET), many of these young people need extensive support to transition into employment, education or training. This is an area of focus for the Participation and Skills areas of EPS in Plymouth City Council.

Several initiatives are under way to extend the options available to 16–25-year-olds with EHCPs which includes growing the number of Supported Internships, Supported Apprenticeships, paid and unpaid volunteering placements. Actions and impacts include:

- Tracking young people with an EHCP on apprenticeship and developing pathways (from 9 in 2022/2023 to 25 this academic year)
- Secured £1.3m SEND innovation grant year 3 to support transition that includes an innovative 'Your Future Programme' which provides 4-to-5-week employability programmes and support for young people. Year 2 of the SEND Innovation grant supported 277 young people against a target of 150 people. There has been a 100% success rate regarding positive next steps for the young people who have already undertaken the 'Your Future' programme. Achievements for these young people have included increased confidence, independent travelling, receiving mentoring to achieve future goals, securing interviews, and securing employment.
- A high number of young people moving into employment or apprenticeships from Supported Internships

2.4. KEY STAGE 4 OUTCOMES

2.4. KEY STAGE 4 OUTCOMES				Previous Year	Current Period & Benchmarking		
Ref	Indicator Name	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	England 2022/23	Statistical Neighbours 2022/23	Plymouth 2022/23
8	Key Stage 4 - % of pupils achieving 5+ in English and Maths	47.1%	51.9%	46.0%	45.5% (22/23 revised)	43.2% (22/23 revised)	41.7% (1,214/2,912)
9	Key Stage 4 - Average Attainment 8 score	48.5 points	50.5 points	47.6 points	46.4 points (22/23 revised)	45.0 points (22/23 revised)	44.9 Points (Average score for 2,912 pupils)

In 2022/23, 41.7% of pupils achieved the 'basics' (5+ in English and Maths). This sits below National (45.5%) and statistical neighbour (43.2%) averages. Performance in Plymouth is 4.3 percentage points lower than the previous academic year, which is just below the decrease seen nationally from 50.0% to 45.5% (4.5pp reduction).

The average Attainment 8 score is 44.9 points this is below the national (46.4 points) and statistical neighbour (45.0 points) averages.

18.5% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieved 'the basics' (5+ in English and Maths). This is below the national average for FSM pupils at 25.0%.

8.2% of pupils with an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) and 18.7% of pupils receiving SEN (Special Educational Needs) Support achieved 'the Basics'. This is above the national average of 6.9% for EHCP pupils and below the national average of 20.7% of pupils receiving SEN Support nationally.

Pupil level data for Key Stage 4 outcomes 2023/24 will be available to the LA in October 2024. School level information will be available to be reported to Scrutiny in the Q2 2024/25 report.

3. ANNEX 1: INDICATOR DEFINITIONS

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY SERVICES
<p>Referrals & Re-Referrals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where concerns about a child have been raised to Children, Young People and Family Services, once the initial contact has been screened by our multi-agency hub, if appropriate, referrals will be accepted. The rate of referrals per 10,000 children is based on the number of referrals received in the 12-month period divided by the number of children aged 0 to 17 in the city (ONS estimate this at 53,291 for Mid-2021) multiplied by 10,000. This gives a rate that can be benchmarked against other authorities. A re-referral is where we receive a new referral for a child within 12 months of a previous referral. The indicator is based on a rolling 12-month period (e.g., 01 December to 30 November).
<p>Children In Need – CIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the purposes of this report, the number of children within the CIN cohort are those that have been assessed as being in need (but not CP or LAC) and the number of children who are in the process of being assessed to understand their level of need. The rate of CIN per 10,000 children is based on the number of CIN at the end of the period divided by the number of children aged 0 to 17 in the city (ONS estimate this at 53,291 for Mid-2021) multiplied by 10,000. This gives a rate that can be benchmarked against other authorities.
<p>Children subject to a Child Protection Plan - CP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Child Protection Plan should assess the likelihood of the child suffering harm and look at ways that the child can be protected. It should decide upon short and long term aims to reduce the likelihood of harm to the child and to protect the child's welfare, clarify people's responsibilities and actions to be taken; and outline ways of monitoring and evaluating progress. The rate of CP per 10,000 children is based on the number of CP at the end of the period divided by the number of children aged 0 to 17 in the city (ONS estimate this at 53,291 for Mid-2021) multiplied by 10,000. This gives a rate that can be benchmarked against other authorities. There are four categories for a Child Protection Plan; Neglect, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Emotional Abuse. The table shows the number and proportion under each category. The % of children subject to multiple child protection plans is the proportion of new Child Protection Plan starting within the period, that are for a child who has had a previous Child Protection Plan at any time in the child's lifetime. The indicator is based on a rolling 12-month period (e.g., the proportion of new Child Protection Plans that started in the period 01 December to 30 November).
<p>Looked After Children (also referred to as Children in Care) - LAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The table shows the number of Looked After Children at the end of the reporting period. The rate of LAC per 10,000 children is based on the number of LAC at the end of the period divided by the number of children aged 0 to 17 in the city (ONS estimate this at 53,291 for Mid-2021) multiplied by 10,000. This gives a rate that can be benchmarked against other authorities. The proportion of placements outside of the city is simply based on the postcode of the child's placement address. Those not within PL1 to PL7 or PL9 are considered outside of the city. For example, PL12 refers to Saltash in Cornwall, which could potentially be less than a mile from a child's home address, but it is outside of Plymouth. The figures provided for the placement types follow the Department for Education and Ofsted definitions, grouping multiple types into nine groups (for example, Family Placements contains six different placement types).
<p>Care Experienced (also referred to as Care Leavers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is deemed as 'Unsuitable' accommodation has been defined by the Department for Education. The following are examples of unsuitable accommodation: Bed and Breakfast / Emergency Accommodation, Prison, Temporary/No fixed abode/Street Homeless, Unknown/Not in Touch. The proportion of Care Experienced young people in Education, Employment and Training is based on our statutory service and therefore covers those young people ages 18 to 20. Whilst we work with Care Experienced young people aged 21 to 24, support is optional for the young person. Please note: The figures are likely to be different to the published Department for Education figures as they look at the age of the young person during the year at the period around their birthday and not at a specific snapshot.

EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND SKILLS**Ofsted Outcomes**

Ofsted is responsible for inspecting schools and other social care services for children. There are four possible Ofsted ratings that a school can receive; Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate. These Ofsted grades are based on inspectors' judgements across four Ofsted categories – quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development of pupils, leadership and management as set out under the [Ofsted framework 2019](#).

Absence Monitoring

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance as set out in [Working together to improve school attendance](#).

Education, Employment or Training

The law requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday, although in practice the vast majority of young people continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. The responsibility and accountability for young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) lies with the local authority and is set out in [Participation Statutory Guidance](#). The Department for Education (DfE) monitors the performance of local authorities in delivering their duties, and specifically in their tracking and supporting of 16 and 17 year olds.

Key Stage Four Outcomes

Key Stage 4 (KS4) is the legal term for the two years of school education which incorporate GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education). During this time, pupils must follow relevant programmes of study from the National Curriculum. At the end of this stage, pupils are entered for a range of external examinations. Following a phased introduction since 2017, GCSEs taken in 2020 and 2021 are all reformed GCSEs graded on a 9-1 scale. Two particular measures are commonly reported on at key stage four:

- percentage pupils achieving 5-9s at English and Maths GCSE in the city, and
- average Attainment 8 scores achieved by schools across the city.

Attainment 8 is calculated by adding together pupils' highest scores across eight government approved school subjects. While these numbers are not made publicly available on a pupil-by-pupil basis, scores taken from across a school year group are averaged to produce a school's overall score. The eight subjects are divided into three categories, called "buckets":

- Bucket 1 - English and maths, which are worth double marks, but English will only count for double marks if both English literature and English (i.e., English language) are taken. The higher grade of the two is used;
- Bucket 2 – The top three scores from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects taken, i.e. sciences, computer science, history, geography and languages;
- Bucket 3 – The top three scores from remaining EBacc subjects or other government approved qualifications (e.g., other GCSEs or Level 2 Certificates in some technical subjects).

The grades are converted into points, put through a formula and finally out comes the school's Attainment 8 score.

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Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023-2024
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Siobhan Logue
Contact Email:	Siobhan.logue@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	PSCP annual report
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

Annual report of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership 2023-2024 – This report highlights the work of the partnership for the year 2023-2024 and is also available on the PSCP website. This has been shared with the Department for Education as per Working Together 2023.

Recommendations and Reasons

For the Panel to note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

This is relevant to the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership Vision

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

None

Financial Risks

None

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

None

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023-2024							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Temilola Salimon

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Approved by David Haley via email 30/09/2024

Date agreed: 30/09/2024

Cabinet Member approval: *[electronic signature (or typed name and statement of 'approved by email/verbally')]* Approved by Cllr Laing via email 30/09/2024

Date approved: 30/09/2024

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ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership

pscp@plymouth.gov.uk
www.plymouthscp.co.uk



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Our shared partnership vision: The right support is available and accessible, at the earliest opportunity, to ensure children and young people in Plymouth are safe and feel safe in their families and communities.



INTRODUCTION FROM OUR STRATEGIC LEADERS

Welcome to our Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership report 2023-2024.

This year has seen the start of a period of significant change for the Partnership with the national publication of the revised Working Together 2023 guidance, published by the Department for Education in December 2023.

This is an exciting time in the development of the Partnership as the new Working Together 2023 guidance strengthens our work going forward to provide the best possible outcomes as a multi-agency system for children, young people and families in Plymouth

Working Together 2023 has provided us with the opportunity to make clear and take ownership of our shared leadership, responsibility and accountability as leaders of the statutory organisations to ensure effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are in place across all agencies working with children and young people.

We are very fortunate in Plymouth to have a large number of statutory and non-statutory partners, who work relentlessly alongside each other to effect change and ensure effective safeguarding for children.

As outlined within the report, there has been a huge amount of activity over this last year, and we enter 2024/25 with strong foundations. We will remain focused on driving forward our shared Partnership vision for children, young people and families in Plymouth, which states we will ensure “The right support is available and accessible, at the earliest opportunity, to ensure children and young people in Plymouth are safe and feel safe in their families and communities.”

Within the report are examples of how Plymouth embraces continuous learning, which is paramount for continuous improvement to provide the best outcomes for children. In the coming year, the Partnership will focus on how to evidence this improvement activity and harness the voice of children and young people to confirm we are getting it right for them.

We are pleased in 2024-2025 to be including Education as our fourth statutory partner and we will welcome representatives at both Lead and Delegated Safeguarding Partner level. This will provide a more holistic approach to safeguarding children in the City by having four key



statutory partners. Our new Governance and assurance arrangements are being finalised and will be published by December 2024.

Finally, we want to thank all those colleagues that are working across the Partnership in a variety of roles, to support children, young people and families every day. Without our strong partnership connections, we would be unable to provide the well-rounded approach to safeguarding children and young people, thank you!



James Colwell
Chief Constable
Devon and Cornwall Police



Tracey Lee
Chief Executive
Plymouth City Council



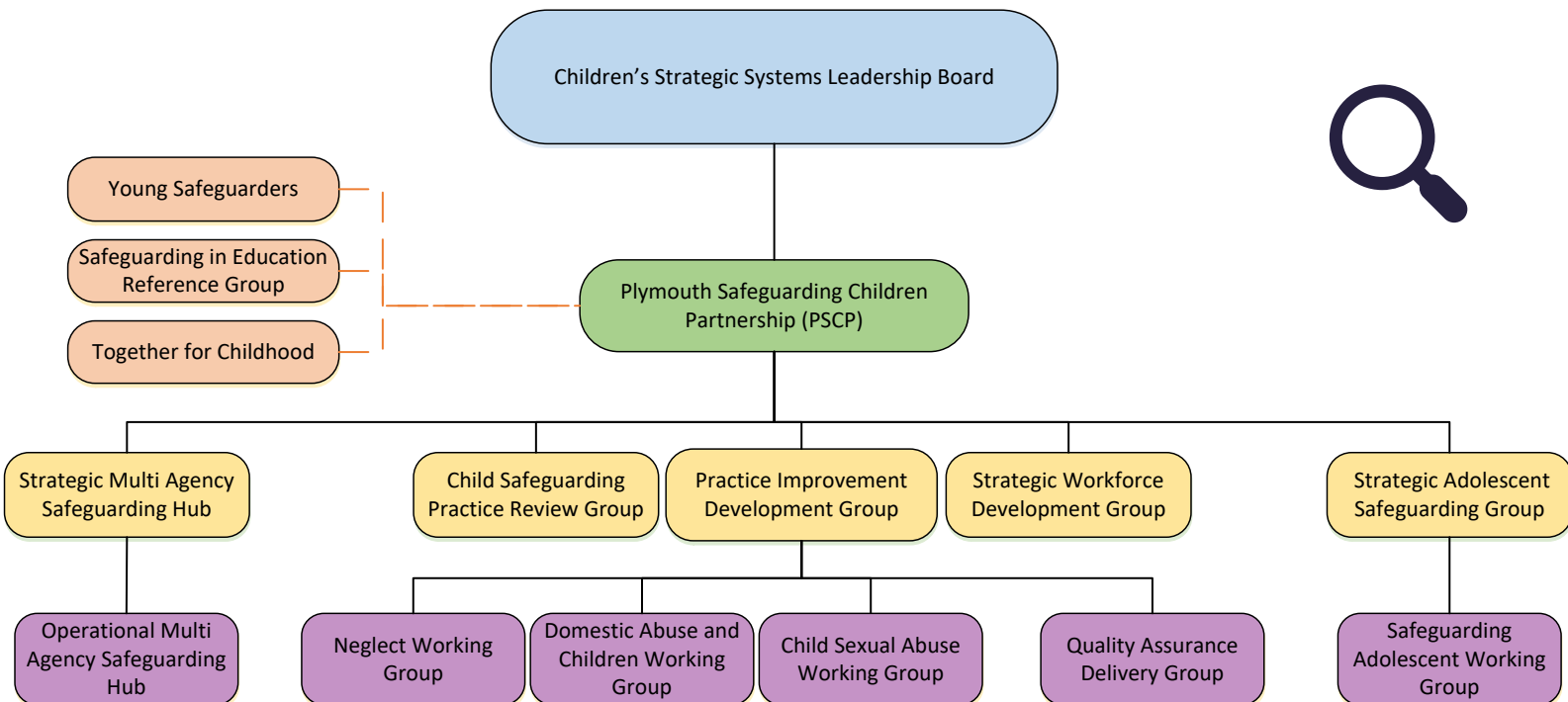
Moira Marder
Chief Executive
Ted Wragg Trust



Steve Moore
Chief Executive
NHS Devon Integrated Care Board

WHAT IS THE PLYMOUTH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP?

The Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership is often known as the PSCP. We are a partnership of agencies who are responsible and accountable for leading safeguarding services across the city. We support each other to learn from local and national reviews identifying what works well and what could be improved within children's safeguarding. We scrutinise the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and hold each other to account to ensure everyone plays their part in keeping children and young people safe, in Plymouth.



Find out more:

Find out more about the Partnership by visiting our website: <https://plymouthscb.co.uk>



WORKING TOGETHER 2023

The partnership has this year embraced the new Working Together 2023 guidance and has been utilising its content to create stronger foundations for our collaborative working.

In Plymouth to ensure we are embracing the new guidance, statutory partners and some partners from our relevant agencies have taken part in a “health check”, facilitated by a representative from the Department for Education. We chose to take the opportunity to complete the health check to encourage growth through a strong self-evaluation which helped us identify our strengths and areas we need to continue to improve on. The health check has enabled us to develop an accurate implementation plan focusing on areas we know require some improvement and we are working as a multi-agency system to ensure we embed the new Working Together guidance, so that partners can work together effectively for children, young people and families.

As part of this implementation, the Lead Safeguarding Partners have been working together to improve outcomes for children by setting the strategic direction for the partnership which will form the basis for the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements due to be published by the end of 2024.

Relevant Agencies

As well as the three Statutory Safeguarding Partners, there are several partner relevant agencies. Although ultimate accountability rests with the three Statutory Partners, the legislation is clear that all agencies share a responsibility for safeguarding children and for working together to achieve that.

The relevant agencies in Plymouth include, but are not limited to:

- All early year’s settings
- All Family Hubs and Children’s Centres
- All primary, secondary, special, further and independent education settings
- Private training providers
- Language schools
- NHS England



- University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust
- Livewell Southwest
- Southwest Ambulance NHS Trust
- Adopt Southwest
- Registered fostering agencies
- CAFCASS
- Probation
- Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
- British Transport Police
- Port and local border police force
- Action for Children
- NSPCC
- Barnardo's
- Children's Society
- Young Devon
- First Light
- Community and social housing providers
- Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service
- Ministry of Defence
- Plymouth Argyle Football Club
- Plymouth Albion Rugby Club
- Plymouth Octopus Project

Find out more:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023.pdf



YOUNG SAFEGUARDERS

In our city we are very lucky to have a group called Young Safeguarders. This is a group of young people from across Plymouth who work to make sure that the lived experience and voices of children and young people are heard and that information that is produced, such as the policies and procedures that affect their lives, are fair and understandable. They meet fortnightly and are supported by the Plymouth City Council Participation Team, with costs part-funded by the PSCP. They provide regular scrutiny of the PSCP, including a quarterly review of our data scorecard.

Previously, The Young Safeguarders produced The Ten Wishes, and these were embedded in the PSCP multi-agency training programme. They have since been updated and relaunched.

This year, the Young Safeguarders have looked at the impact of social issues including the cost-of-living crisis and mental wellbeing. They have also spent time understanding vaping and access to toilets for other young people in schools and completed a survey with their peers, feeding this information into the Safeguarding in Education Reference Group.

TEN WISHES

What Children and Young People in Plymouth want from you...



We want professionals to be easier to contact.

We want professionals to be on time, as they expect us to be.

We want professionals to be properly trained and for us to be involved in the training.

We want professionals to ask us what we need and not to assume.

We want professionals to do what they say they are going to do, to listen and stand up for us.

We want professionals to use words we understand.

We want professionals to reassure us something is being done and tell us how long it will take.

We want professionals to understand when we need to talk to them one-to-one.

We want professionals to ask us 'do you feel safe?'

We want professionals to respect us and how we feel.



Making a difference:

The Young Safeguarders also scrutinise the work of the partnership and have reviewed the new Building Support document, making edits to it, as well as reviewing and asking questions to the learning and development lead about how the Graded Care Profile 2 neglect tool works and is implemented in Plymouth, so they can understand it.

The Young Safeguarders are proud to go on learning walks where they experience different aspects of the partnership and the impact these areas have on young people. This year they have attended learning walks at the Police custody in Plymouth and within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Making a difference:

During the Young Safeguarders learning walk within Police Custody, they highlighted that they felt Young People were treated differently by officers on different shift patterns.

The Young Safeguarders commented on how officers perceived there to be a culture that young people have the power “on the streets” but the Police have the power within custody; and how custody could benefit from a consistent approach to under 18’s in the custody suite to avoid bias or confusion, this was fed back to the Police via a report.

The Young Safeguarders have been working with CAMHS to plan their next learning walk in 2024 at the Place of Safety for a young person undergoing a Mental Health Act Assessment, they will be evaluating the suitability of the environment and whether the needs of young people are properly reflected.

The Young Safeguarders have also highlighted young people’s attitudes, interactions and approaches within online spaces and how young people are taking dangerous risks based on preconceptions, and that online is no longer virtual but now a real factor in young people’s lives. The Young Safeguarders identified that online pornography is normalising sexual violence against women in the attitudes of young people and raised concerns regarding how easy it is for young people to access pornography without appropriate checks or boundaries.

The Young Safeguarders have supported partnership work alongside Together For Childhood around pornography which included contributing to a play and are now leading the next phase of the campaign, developing assets to support peer-to-peer conversations and critical awareness of porn influence and its contribution to harmful behaviours.

Find out more:

<https://plymouthscb.co.uk/young-safeguarders-2/>

SAFEGUARDING IN EDUCATION

In Plymouth, we recognise the valuable strengths of our education partners who spend a huge amount of time with our children and young people.

Under Working Together 2023, we have raised the profile of Education within our partnership and have an education representative at Lead Safeguarding Partner (LSP) level and Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) level. We also ensure all our partnership subgroups have education representation.

We have a Safeguarding in Education Reference Group (SERG) where representatives from the education sector come together to discuss current practice in relation to safeguarding and share information from the other partnership groups, including updates in relation to Prevent, information on new training offers through the PSCP and current themes and trends in relation to safeguarding adolescents.

The partnership manager and other partner agency representatives also regularly attend the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) meetings to ensure education partners are appraised of current partnership work and emerging themes in safeguarding.





Each year all relevant education provisions complete an audit called a S175/157. This process is part of the partnership Quality Assurance work and helps to gather an annual snapshot of safeguarding and safeguarding practice in all educational settings across the city.

Below is a sample of four of the questions within the S.175/157 this year.

Where the establishment's premises are used by independent services outside of school/college hours the Governing Body/Trust Body have sought assurance that the service has appropriate policies and procedures in place, including safeguarding policies, operate safe recruitment practices and have appropriately trained staff to deal with incidents of actual or suspected abuse	Previous Year 85%	This Year 99%
Relevant staff members have completed Operation Encompass training to receive Public Protection Notices	99.01%	
Training, policies and procedures are in place to support students experiencing domestic abuse in the home	99.01%	
The setting is aware of the neglect Graded Care Profile and the requirement to engage in its implementation	83.17%	

This year the SERG has worked closely with Children's Services Education, Participation and Skills (EPS) team and The Young Safeguarders to look at vaping and the vaping of illegal substances, and how this can impact access to toilets in schools and lead to permanent exclusions for students.

Making a difference:

The SERG and EPS have been working closely with Public Health to support schools to address the concerns surrounding the vaping of illegal substances. There has since been a significant drop in the rate of permanent exclusions for this issue throughout this academic year.



BUILDING SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES IN PLYMOUTH

In Summer 2023 the Plymouth Partnership recognised there was a lack of understanding around consent, thresholds and information sharing associated with referrals into Children's Services following implementation of Building Support guidance in 2021/22.

Therefore, in September 2023 partners gathered to review the building support document and alter it to meet the needs of all partners, and a new version of "*Building Support for Children, Young People and Families in Plymouth*" was launched to address the confusion.

All agencies signed up to this at a senior and strategic level to enable shared responsibility for practice development and improved consistency of practice for children and families.

The launch of the new document was followed by a series of free workshops for all agencies delivered by colleagues from across the Partnership to build confidence with assessing risk and thresholds for referrals. In total, 473 staff attended these workshops.

As part of our quality assurance process, we collected evaluations at the end of each workshop. The evaluation forms had several questions that were rated on a scale of 1 - 5 (With 5 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest score). Below is the average score from the 228 evaluation forms we have received on each question:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. How helpful was the pre-reading: | 4.17 Out of 5 |
| 2. How was the quality of the presentation: | 4.37 Out of 5 |
| 3. Did the content meet your needs: | 4.32 Out of 5 |
| 4. How useful will this learning be for the work that you do: | 4.41 Out of 5 |



Building Support for Children, Young People & Families in Plymouth

ENSURING THE RIGHT SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN,
YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES IN PLYMOUTH

Making a difference: A Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Review Following Building Support Professional Enquiry Training Workshops

What difference has been made to the quality of referrals?

The quality of the referrals from some services, particularly from Schools, Health CAMHS and Health visitors have generally improved. The MASH would like to see more training to improve the quality of the referrals made in some areas of the wider system.

How has the understanding of thresholds, as evidenced by referrals and calls to the professional's enquiry line, been affected?

It is fair to say schools have a better understanding around the levels of need for a child since the completion of the training. Similarly, Health Visitors and Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service equally have a deeper understanding of the levels of need for children.

Schools make good use of the professional enquiry line and will explore Early Help Support as an option available. When schools are advised to make a referral to the MASH, they are prompt to do so.

When the professional line was initially introduced, some professionals did not understand its purpose. Though it took time to explain to professionals the aim and objectives of the professional line, the MASH has seen good use of the line by professionals calling in to have hypothetical discussions and to explore creative ways to support children and families.

What difference has the training made to obtaining or consideration of consent?

There is still some work to be done within the MASH and the wider system around consent, information sharing and where consent can be overridden for safeguarding concerns, this will be addressed widely through the launch of our multi-agency information sharing agreement later in 2024.

Find out more:

www.plymouthscb.co.uk/building-support



TRAUMA-INFORMED PLYMOUTH

The PSCP ensures that trauma informed practice is maintained and will apply the trauma-informed lens in its work by using the Trauma Informed Plymouth Network principles.

This means that throughout its arrangements the PSCP shall ensure that it supports the 5 core values for a trauma-informed Plymouth:

Safe: there is consideration of the psychological safety of those involved in and impacted by its safeguarding arrangements.

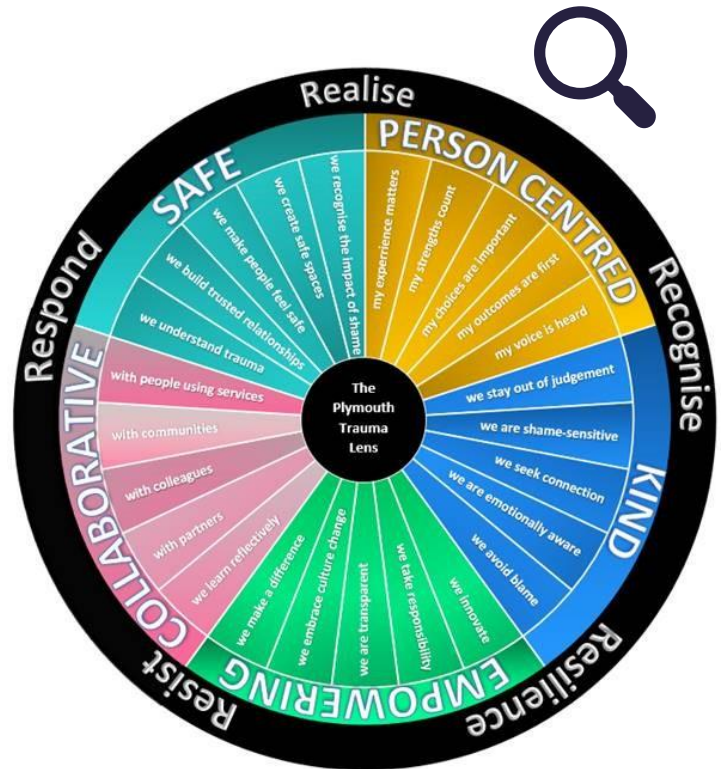
When meeting, engaging and working with children, young people, families, communities and professionals all efforts shall be made to establish trusting relationships.

Person centred: understanding the lived experience of children, young people, families and communities and the circumstances which led to their involvement within services. Voices of the child, young person, families and communities shall be listened to and heard with respect.

Collaborative: children, young people, families, communities and professionals are treated as equal partners in the PSCP safeguarding arrangements. Learning shall be reflective with openness and emotional awareness.

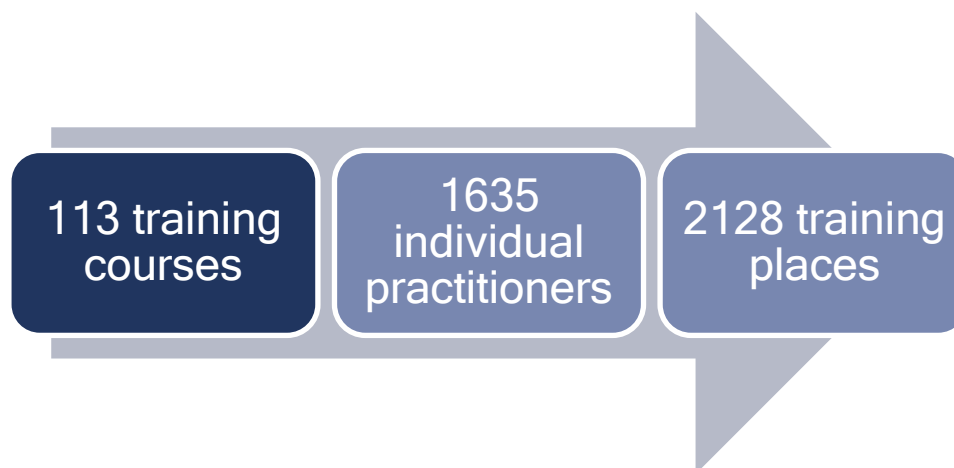
Empowering: there is an overriding expectation that the PSCP safeguarding arrangements shall make a genuine difference. All involved, engaged or working within safeguarding services deserve to know that their contributions have influenced real change and that the PSCP is going to ensure that learning from their involvement, engagement or work is meaningful and widely disseminated.

Kind: ensure that language is appropriate and mindful of victim blaming or falling into judgement. There shall be understanding that traumatic circumstances may evidence behaviour that is considered challenging, and the trauma lens shall be applied to try to understand the underlying cause of this. There shall be kindness, clear transparent and compassionate communication and engagement.



LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: WHAT WE'VE DELIVERED

The PSCP provides a large amount of multi-agency training to professionals across the city. Below is a snapshot of what we've done in the past twelve months.



We seek feedback during and after all our training courses. Over the past twelve months, participants have valued:



Find out more:

Our full training offer and more information about how to book on can be found on

our website: <https://plymouthscb.co.uk/training-development/course-information-and-bookings/>

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: LEARNING INTO PRACTICE

We feel that it's important to not just offer the training but to go back to practitioners after they've had time to reflect and ask them what difference it has made to their practice. We currently ask for these reflections three months after a training session. Here is some of the feedback received:

Making a difference:

One of the partnership trainers shared that during delivery of a Child Sexual Abuse workshop an attendee identified some concerns regarding the leader of a local activity group. They discussed these concerns with the facilitator and was escalated to the Local Authority Designated Officer, the police spoke to the individual and they no longer work with children in that role. Specifically, it has been noted that the Paths to Perpetration section of the CSA workshop informed the decision for the attendee to report their concerns.'

In the last couple of weeks, I have submitted a CP review report and was able to focus much more on positives for the parent/family due to the training and the new reports looking at what they have done well and not solely discussing the negatives.
Working Together to Safeguard Children Course



'The levels of risk infographic has really helped, as a DSO I have to make referrals across England and many MASH teams use this, so it can help when making referrals to articulate what support we feel that young person may need. I have marked the previous question as a 3, only because I have done so many training courses before I was well versed in signs and symptoms of abuse. I would add that it was expertly facilitated and by far the best safeguarding training I have attended in my 15+ years of working in adult mental health'

Understanding Child Protection Course

The course helped me to change the way in which I speak to families rather than sound like I am speaking from a textbook.

Working Together to Safeguard Children
Course

Making a difference:

A Senior Professional Youth Worker shared they had attended the PSCP training on Supervision Skills & Workforce Support and that it was excellent. It really helped them think about how they can support others and will be putting those skills into practice.

Making a difference:

After attending one of our "Introduction to child sexual abuse" workshops, a member of staff at PATH (Plymouth Access to Housing) identified a family they had been working with where there were concerns about an adult with previous sexual offences towards children. They were able to identify the risk using the information gained at the workshop and they contacted the NSPCC Together For Childhood for further guidance. The child in that household was protected from harm. Being an adult facing service they did not initially consider that the workshop would have been relevant to them."


OUR PRIORITIES REVIEWED

The Partnership agreed 4 priority areas of focus for 2023-2024 and created a Plan on a Page highlighting these and the partnership vision. The current priorities are neglect; child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour; domestic abuse & children, and safeguarding adolescents.

In 2023 the partnership embarked on a large piece of work to create a strategy, practice guidance and toolkit in each priority area using multi-agency task and finish groups. The creation of this ensures we are being ambitious about making a difference with our priorities to keep children and young people safe in Plymouth.

These strategies, practice guidance and toolkits are to be launched in Summer 2024 on the PSCP website and the task and finish groups will then become working groups to deliver on the strategies and to implement learning from local and national learning reviews and emerging themes and trends in these priority areas.





PSCP Vision & Plan on a Page 2023 - 2024

Vision

The right support is available and accessible, at the earliest opportunity, to ensure children & young people in Plymouth are safe and feel safe in their families and communities

Response to Neglect	Response to Sexual Harm	Response to Domestic Abuse	Safeguarding Adolescents
<p>What we want to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved early help offer - Reduction in Child Protection Plans for neglect - Practice tools support change with families <p>How we will do that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update our neglect strategy - Implement the Graded Care Profile 2 - Undertake quality assurance activity to find what is working and where we could do things differently. 	<p>What we want to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved identification of signs and symptoms of sexual harm - Increase in Child Protection Plans for sexual abuse - Improved access to support <p>How we will do that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embed Together for Childhood learning across the city - Create a strategy to drive change and improvement. 	<p>What we want to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved access to support for child and adult victims - Improved access to support for those who cause harm. - Improved early help offer to prevent escalation of harm <p>How we will do that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen our 'routine enquiry' skills and response - Focus on the impact of early intervention within our reviews. 	<p>What we want to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assurance that young people receive support that understands their development needs and the types of harm they may experience. <p>How we will do that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and re-launch the Adolescent Safety Framework - Update our Adolescent Strategy

Underpinning Themes

1. Organisational Culture & Professional Support: Underpinning all that we do will be a focus on ensuring the right organisational culture and professional support is in place across all agencies. We know a healthy and stable workforce is key to engaging in the work of our partnership.
2. Trauma Informed & Restorative: In all our work, we will understand how trauma shapes children, families and communities experience of the world. We will support change with children, families and communities by being restorative, strengths based and daring to do things differently.
3. Whole Family Approach: We will always work 'with' families and adopt a 'family first' mind-set to help keep children safe, happy and at home.

Partnership Pledges

1. We will work respectfully with children and their families, making sure we know how they live their lives and include them in decision making.
2. We will be positive in our work with children and their families, recognising what is working well and building on strengths.
3. We will build relationships with children, families and communities; and with colleagues across the workforce, to give us the best chance of success.
4. We will be professionally curious and open to different opinions, making sure we are acting in the best interest of children.
5. We will have an appetite to learn and aim to continuously improve.

pscp@plymouth.gov.uk
www.plymouthscp.co.uk

PSCP Vision & Plan on a Page 2023-24
May 2022 v2

OUR PRIORITIES REVIEWED: NEGLECT

Children with Child Protection plans are highest in the category of neglect with figures indicating an increase in the numbers from 35.5% in early 2023 to 50.6% in early 2024.

In Plymouth we recognise that neglect is challenging for practitioners as it is frequently passive and not always intentional. Neglect is more likely to be a chronic condition rather than crisis-led and this impacts on how agencies respond. It is often combined with other forms of abuse.

Plymouth is committed to prevention, early identification, and intervention in respect of neglect and its negative impact on children and young people, because of the serious impact it has on the long-term chances for children.

In 2023 the PSCP embedded the use of the NSPCC's Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2). The GCP2 is an NSPCC strengths-based assessment tool that uses a graded scale to measure levels of care for a child. It can help families understand their child's needs and create conversations that lead to positive change and progress. It creates a consistent approach and shared language for us in Plymouth when responding to neglect and helps families get the right support at the right time.

The hospital dental theatre lists show the poor condition of a child's teeth is a good indicator of neglect. This year, UHP identified 267 children who had dental extractions or full dental mouth clearances due to dental caries.

Making a difference:

A school trust shared that practitioners are reporting that they are finding the GCP2 to be a very useful tool especially around cases of long-term neglect. This is supporting the identification of levels of neglect and therefore helping families get the right help as well as provide more accurate data for schools in terms of the nature of the neglect they are working with.

The partnership has delivered many training inputs across multiple agencies around GCP2 and there has been positive progress from using this tool, however there is still some way to go to embed the tool within Children's Services and this is being promoted within individual teams, through the Partnership, through the Social Work Academy and this will be addressed even further into 2024.

Making a difference:

A family support worker shared how using the GCP2 with a family in child protection planning was a useful way of helping the family understand the worries shared by professionals in a clear and easily understandable way and therefore supporting carers to help them focus on the children's needs.

Multi-agency neglect quality assurance activity evidences the following neglect practice strengths:

- Some persistent efforts to build trusting relationships with children and share information across the Partnership have enabled better understanding of children's lived experience.
- The MASH consultation line is proving useful for timely advice.
- Partnership confidence is growing relevant to the need for consent from families to make a MASH referral.
- Since September Police Public Protection Notifications are timelier and the content and language is clearer.
- Some children are being kept safe with safety equipment that the Partnership is providing to families.
- Parenting groups are supporting some parents to develop improved strategies to manage neglect and to ensure better boundaries and routines for children.

In the last two years, Police state there has been significant progress in the ability to prosecute neglect cases which enables effective whole system safeguarding.

Making a difference:

A mother was found by police to be intoxicated looking after her two-month-old child. A joint investigation commenced with Children's Services and the child was removed by Police and put into the care of the Local Authority who placed child with father. Investigating Police Officer, Children's Services and other partner agencies worked together to support the child and father and help him obtain a court order to protect the child and himself from the mother.

Making a difference:

Child C had experienced domestic abuse. Mother and child left and when mother and child were living alone, concerns were raised around neglect, due to poor home conditions and no routine. GCP2 was completed with the family and a realistic cleaning schedule was created in partnership, practical support was also offered to clear some items. Parenting sessions were offered to support the development of routines, positive management of behaviours and child's language and development. Mother and child were also signposted to other community resources and supported to access funding. A grant was also secured to ensure a lock on the property could be fixed. Child C is now attending nursery and benefitting from regular opportunities to play, socialise and learn. Routines are in place and mother feels confident managing behaviours. The home environment is clean with space for the child to play.

Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership support and are members of the ICON: Babies Cry, You Can Cope! programme which helps parents and carers cope with a crying baby. Looking after a baby is an incredibly special and wonderful time. We also know it can be a very stressful time and trying to calm a crying baby is something all parents and carers experience. The Partnership promotes the training and online tools available from ICON.

The partnership is also supporting the multi-agency workforce to be aware of the safer sleep message and share in the responsibility to help all Plymouth babies sleep more safely. Understanding and promoting safer sleep for babies is a universal message for all families.

In 2024 we will be launching our ambitious neglect strategy, practice guidance and toolkit which will not only assist practitioners but will also highlight what we plan to do as a partnership to prevent neglect and provide better outcomes for children.

Making a difference:

In March 2024, members of the partnership from health and the partnership team attended Plymouth Argyle football club fan zone and held a stall promoting safer sleep for babies.

One member of the public stated that he was pleased he had chatted with the team as he was unaware of the current safer sleep guidance, and he would now be mindful of this while caring for his young family. The advice and visual aids from the Lullaby Trust proved to be useful conversation starters, and many people took these away with them to share with family members.

OUR PRIORITIES REVIEWED: SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS

In 2023 a task and finish group for Safeguarding Adolescents was created to work together on the creation of a strategy, practice guidance and toolkit around safeguarding our adolescents in Plymouth. This strategy addresses specific needs and concerns which directly affect our adolescents including mental wellbeing, substance use, harmful sexual behaviour and absences from school. As part of the toolkit creation and following feedback from partners, this multi-agency group is also creating a new, more streamlined version of the Adolescent Safety Framework (ASF) which will launch in 2024 with training inputs.

There is a correlation between exclusion from school and safeguarding concerns.



Our operational Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings have undergone a review and have moved to a Daily Intelligence Briefing (DIB) model. This change now allows for a better daily focus on contextual safeguarding by concentrating on those young people most at risk of going missing and being exploited alongside a focus on themes, locations and particular adults of concern. The outcome is a more joined-up multi-agency response to protect young people.

Making a difference:

The DIB has had a positive impact in young people and families as the support/intervention is offered more promptly and it promotes effective partnership working given that a response is planned, and all agencies are fully aware of their commitment to that response. The DIB prioritises missing children, children in custody, children at risk of exploitation and the response occurs more quickly than previously as there is no requirement to wait for the monthly operational MACE meeting.

Making a difference:

The DIB identified two 16-year-olds who were staying in an unsafe environment with access to drugs supplied by an adult. Agencies worked together to safeguard the young people and arrest the adult; Partners have then subsequently worked with the young people and their families to provide ongoing support.

A Quality Assurance multi-agency audit was completed at the end of 2023, this highlighted the success of the DIB, however showed that the current group of professionals is a strong group which may be too dependent on working relationships where professionals go “above and beyond” rather than having a robust system in place to provide long-term support in this area. The action from this was to further develop the Adolescent Safety Framework, as well as review commissioned specialist support services across the local authority.

140 home educated children have been supported to return to school.

Making a difference:

Support from the Child Centred Policing Team has led to feedback from a parent whose son has now joined the army to which the parent credits the quality of support and intervention from Police and partners.

Partners have highlighted that there is a lack of provision for young people at risk of exploitation and County Lines as most activities available are sport related and many young people would engage in other activities such as hair/dance/beauty which is currently not offered and may be more attractive to our young people. This will be addressed alongside the Community Safety Partnership and through the Safeguarding Adolescent Working Group with oversight of the Partnership in 2024/25.

Adolescents have their own dedicated ward in University Hospital Plymouth, Wildgoose Ward. Paediatric staff are trained to respond to adolescent needs.

Making a difference:

Partnership work between an educational psychologist, social worker and school led to a young person being placed on a Child Protection plan following risks of sexual exploitation and abuse where parents had been unable to safeguard. Agencies will work together with parents to help safeguard the young person.

OUR PRIORITIES REVIEWED: DOMESTIC ABUSE AND CHILDREN

The PSCP, in partnership with the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence partnership board, have started the creation of a strategy, practice guidance and toolkit to address Domestic Abuse and Children, focusing on children as survivors.

This ambitious co-produced strategy, guidance and toolkit will help practitioners to identify Domestic Abuse and its impact on children and know what to do to improve outcomes for children, young people and families who are experiencing domestic abuse. Top tips are being developed to support this for practitioners in different roles e.g. Family Hubs and community support, schools etc

The DA and Children Strategy will help form the priorities for the upcoming commissioning of Workforce Development, behaviour change and DA support services for children and their families. The guidance and toolkit when completed will be shared with the DASV Partnership. The partnership working has helped to move towards the Coordinated Community Response that is being developed in Plymouth.

DA Commissioning lead, Plymouth City Council

Domestic abuse continues to have a significant impact on children and is reflected by the significant numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plans who have a history of experiencing domestic abuse within the home.

Multi-agency domestic abuse quality assurance activity evidences the following practice strengths:

- Timely referrals to Early Help.
- Child centred practice.
- Where there is evidence of good multi-agency working and information sharing, the risks to children are better identified and supported to reduce the risk of domestic abuse.
- Families feeling supported and guided by practitioners.

Police Public Protection Notices (PPN's) have increased to **10366** children in early 2024 compared with **8155** the previous year indicating a **27% increase** in notifications over the last year. Police must complete a PPN for all incidents of Domestic Abuse.



- Knowledge of recent changes in legislation where children are identified to be victims of domestic abuse has supported parents to consider the impact of children's experiences of domestic abuse.
- Evidence of good supervision in some agencies.
- Trauma informed working.

Identified Learning for the Partnership:

- Social workers need to share information with partners when children are closed to Children's Services.
- We need to understand what information is stored by partners.
- Consent from parents can be a barrier.
- We need to spend more time with children to really understand their lived experience.
- We need to improve our understanding of each other's agency roles.
- We need to embed the routine enquiry in all agencies practice.

Making a difference:

A health visitor requested support for a parent who has historically fled domestic abuse. The Family Hubs team met with the parent and children and discussed services and support. The parent said they felt attendance at Step-By-Step (which is a group for children and their parents/carers when there are concerns about development) and a parenting group would be beneficial. The parent has attended both. Staff have offered regular check-ins and support during the parenting programme. Overall, this support has enabled the child to benefit from additional opportunities for socialisation, as well as have a parent who feels more able to support development and manage guidance, boundaries and routines at home. Attendance at these programmes has also supported the parent in building their peer support network.

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has commissioned the Interpersonal Trauma Response Service (ITRS) across GP surgeries in Devon including Plymouth. ITRS trains GPs to identify domestic abuse, sexual violence and indicators of related trauma in patients.

Included in the support offer from ITRS is support for children affected by domestic abuse. ITRS employ 2 children's specialist workers and have recently appointed a new young person specialist post for: 14-17yr olds who have experienced any form of domestic abuse, 18-21yr olds who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence with an ability to support up to the age of 25 if there are additional factors, for example - care leavers.



The Local authority Education Participation and Skills service are regularly involved in supporting schools to understand the ongoing impact of domestic abuse on children and young people's neurodevelopment. They also offer trauma informed information, advice and guidance to all childcare settings through training and bulletins.

UHP will place a 'risk of domestic abuse' alert on the child's hospital records so that if the child presents to UHP, the clinician is aware that there is a domestic abuse risk and inform assessments and plans of care.

Following Barnardo's DA pathway work in family hubs, children have told us.
 "My relationship with my mum has become stronger and better"
 "Mum is happier, I am happier"

The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Team have

created Local authority Level 1 DA e-learning available to external partners. We can track the numbers of external staff by organisation who complete this training. The VAWGDASV workforce development programme is being commissioned to include Level 2 and 3 DA training.

Devon and Cornwall Police Central Safeguarding Team (CST) have increased the school database for Op Encompass with 100% of Plymouth schools subscribed. This is now being extended to include Early Years.

Find out more:

Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse. <https://www.operationencompass.org>





OUR PRIORITIES REVIEWED: CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

In 2023, alongside Safer Plymouth's Community Safety Partnership, the partnership launched an ambitious strategy, guidance and toolkit creation task and finish group for Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) in Plymouth. This group is chaired by a representative from the NSPCC Together for Childhood programme and has members from multiple organisations within the partnership to provide a collective input and sign up.

"There has been significant change in the local system response to CSA this year culminating in the delivery of a CSA 12-month strategy and associated CSA guidance & Toolkit."
NSPCC - Together for Childhood

The Workforce Development Group has led the delivery of harmful sexual behaviour training with inputs delivered by named nurses from University Hospital Plymouth and Livewell Southwest. Together for Childhood has been facilitating focused projects with the CSA Centre of Expertise, specifically to work with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, utilising 'CSA signs and indicators' tool and introducing managing harmful sexual behaviour in schools with education colleagues in the city.

Making a difference:

The NSPCC has seen signs that there is an improving approach to recognising signs and indicators of CSA, particularly from education partners who are using the tool to record and build a picture of concerns about CSA.

The training from the PSCP is well received and local collaborative working to develop the CSA training offer and delivery has benefited the local partnership.

Multi-agency CSA case audits have been integral to developing the knowledge of the partnership and have been critical in formulating training, the strategy and key priorities.

University Hospitals Plymouth, with multi-agency input, has Safeguarded 19 cases of Child Sexual Abuse that have presented to the hospital this year.

Making a difference:

A practice learning review identified lack of CSA knowledge and confidence within Children's Services. This has led to a pilot where Children's Services have had inputs from the CSA Centre of Expertise and the NSPCC to use the signs and indicators tool to help identify CSA at the earliest opportunity.

Young people have been working to make a difference in relation to CSA:

- Partnership working with City College and NSPCC has resulted in young people developing and testing a Young Persons led delivery on CSA awareness, peer to peer.
- Young People in primary and secondary schools have been using the EMPOWER framework to quality assure their healthy relationships education, helping to ensure young people voice is embedded in the planning and delivery of education.

Making a difference:

Child A reported CSA to the Police. Support for Child A has been achieved through positive partnership working between Children's services, Health, Police and School enabling child A to build trust with all agencies to help build a safe environment and guidance through the legal process.

Significant gaps remain in CSA Recovery Services and Harmful Sexual Behaviour services from a commissioning and safeguarding position, but this is improving now that there are commitments within the CSA strategy.

With growing crime trends in the online space, Devon and Cornwall Police Paedophile Online Investigation Team has good links with Children's services and has conducted many joint operations to safeguard children at risk of harm this year.

Making a Difference:

Audits show us that -

- timely referrals from partners to Children's Services in relation to CSA, increase more timely actions to keep children safe.
- Children who are seen and spoken to alone with a safe relationship with their social worker are sharing their lived experience and wishes.

NATIONAL LEARNING

National Panel Report

The national panel published their annual report detailing themes from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) alongside Rapid Review examples, which were reviewed by the CSPR Subgroup and the full Partnership. The themes outlined in the report were considered by all to ensure the partnership is focusing appropriately on nationally important themes alongside local priorities.

National Panel Report on Elective Home Education

This report has been shared with partnership colleagues for dissemination through our CSPR group.

National Reform

In December 2023 the Department for Education published several documents looking at national reform for Children's social care -

National Kinship Strategy - this is evidenced within Plymouth Children's Services records where consideration is given to placing a child with another family member where required and appropriate.

National framework for children's social care - This has been considered as part of the Plymouth Children's services 3-year plan for improvement.

Working Together to Safeguard Children - This will be implemented as per the Working Together pages in this report.

Transforming Data - In Plymouth we have had no Police data since November 2022. This is a significant data gap in the partnership and will be resolved in 2024. As a partnership we have a plan to build a comprehensive data dashboard which will coincide with the Children's Social Care dashboard. Currently we have a small amount of data for a dashboard which is reviewed in our Practice Improvement Development Group.

In March 2024 - The Information Sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services.

We are working with a Department for Education lead authority - Somerset, to create Tier 1 and Tier 2 information sharing agreements for the Partnership which are due to be signed off at the PSCP executive meeting in 2024.

LOCAL LEARNING

A learning culture is paramount to enable a constant cycle of positive change for safeguarding children, young people and families in Plymouth and it is our responsibility as a Partnership to examine safeguarding practices across our partner agencies so that we can develop and continuously improve to provide the best outcomes for all.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

We have a multi-agency Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) group in Plymouth who decide the process for a Rapid Review or full CSPR and ensure internal guidance is created for us to implement learning quickly after a child has suffered significant harm. At the beginning of 2023, we decided that the decision for a Rapid Review would be mutually agreed by senior representatives of the three statutory organisations. When a referral for a Rapid Review is received, the Partnership Manager arranges a meeting with the three statutory partners so this discussion can take place. This method of decision making was further reinforced by the Working Together 2023 guidance which has also moved to this model.

When we complete a full CSPR the learning from this is published on our PSCP website.

Learning from Experience Reviews

We have decided as a Partnership that if the criteria is not met for a CSPR, but there is still learning to be gained to enable system change and better outcomes for children in the future, a Partnership Learning from Experience review will be convened. This enables all organisations involved in a child's life to come together to discuss their agency and joint agency involvement so that practice areas that need to be strengthened are identified and a practice improvement plan is agreed which are overseen by the CSPR group. This provides a robust level of scrutiny to enable better learning.

Quality Assurance Audits

Four to six times a year our Quality Assurance Delivery Group (QADG) arranges multi-agency audits of our practice with children based on topics agreed within the yearly workplan which are identified using referral data, emerging themes and national learning. The PSCP audit tool is used to capture the child's experiences with each service and how the agencies are working in partnership, the audits are a helping tool to support the identification of what is working well and what practice needs to be strengthened. A Practice Learning Review meeting is then



arranged so that the practice patterns and themes identified within the audits can be discussed and actions can be identified for practice improvements. All agencies are involved in leading the Practice Learning Reviews; and a one-page learning briefing is produced which is circulated across the Partnership with the actions plan. The relevant Partnership Working group takes responsibility for progressing the actions. This quality assurance arrangement provides a reliable evidence base to enable actions to be identified for practice improvements to be achieved. To close the loop and evidence difference made, the QADG work plan sets out a repeat of the same quality assurance activity so that progress with practice improvement actions can be evidenced.

S.175/157 Schools Safeguarding Audits

Education providers are required to ensure their safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date and in line with legal requirements. The S.175/157 audit process uses questions to education providers to identify gaps in their safeguarding and can also highlight safeguarding emerging themes. The audit questions are created in conjunction with the education participation and skills team in Children's Services and the Quality Assurance Delivery Group. A sample of the last audit can be seen in the education section of this report.

S.11 Audits

The PSCP undertakes Section 11 audits, in line with The Children Act (2004) to ensure the PSCP partners are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare. These are carried out individually with each agency as a reflective audit process.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

The PSCP has close links with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in Plymouth where Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR's) are completed as multi-agency learning reviews following the murder or suicide of a victim of domestic abuse. Multiple partners from our safeguarding children system take part in these reviews and any learning is disseminated amongst partners and actions monitored by the DASV board.

Making a difference: Rapid Review 2023/24

In Plymouth, we have had one rapid review in 2023/2024 which was completed within the 15-day time frame and the report shared with the National Panel who agreed a local CSPR would not be required. The learning from this has been tracked through actions disseminated to the multi-agency system from the CSPR group.

Some of the themes from this Rapid Review and learning implemented:

Professional curiosity around new partners and the myth of the invisible man to be shared.

- The myth of the invisible man has been shared with all partners and a reminder around professional curiosity has been provided through the leaders for excellence programme in Children's Services, QA and Ofsted ILACS activity has not found this to be a continued issue.

Accurate chronologies. - Training has been rolled out across Children's Services to include use of the chronology tool and the importance of accurate chronologies.

Strategy Discussions to not be delayed for medical examinations. - This information was disseminated to the appropriate teams in Children's Services and audit processes in January 2024 have shown timely strategy meetings.

Health to review family records as well as identify child's lived experience for the child and historic risk factors - This learning was shared with teams and managers to share across the health system.

Timely referrals to the MASH when concerns of possible non-accidental injury. - This has been sent to all staff in an email as well as incorporated in training supported by the hospital safeguarding team in office hours.

Ensure risks to siblings are considered when treating a child with non-accidental injury. - Emergency staff in the hospital have been advised to consider this and call the safeguarding team in the hospital during office hours or the out of hours Children's Services Team outside of these times.

ICB to lead on embedding ICON - There is an ICON/Safer Sleep multi-agency working group in place which have been working on a media campaign and working with GPs to help embed across the system.

Domestic abuse training to be explored in agencies and external providers to ensure it contains required information and guidance - As per the Domestic abuse update in this report, training is being created and commissioned by the DASV board and is being held alongside the domestic abuse and children working group.

Making a difference: Learning from Experience Reviews 2023/24

In Plymouth we have had two learning from experience reviews in 2023/24

Some of the themes from these learning from experience reviews and learning implemented:

Conduct work to ensure staff belonging to PSCP member organisations, and our community, understand the nature and prevalence of child sexual abuse. CSA working group is working with the Workforce Development Group to embed understanding & prevalence of CSA. Multi-agency training is also being delivered.

Decision makers across the Partnership to recognise the seriousness of sexual abuse and to ensure the right thresholds are applied. Building Support document has been redesigned alongside the signs & indicators toolkit. NSPCC Together for Childhood has provided training to social work managers. CSA training is available through the PSCP and the CSA working group is developing strategy, guidance and toolkits within this space.

Staff of PSCP member organisations to gather all available information in potential child sexual abuse cases, to fully understand the potential risks and guard against 'unconscious bias. The Signs & Indicators tool helps focuses on eliminating unconscious professional bias and increasing visibility. Partnership training offers also address this.

PSCP to review how to ensure communication in complex cases in maintained for the benefit of all professionals involved, and especially the child. Communication in complex cases has improved since this review. Discussion of complex cases across Partner agencies is regular and ongoing where thresholds for CSPR are not met to identify potential learning for the Partnership as a whole. Strategy discussions within the MASH are happening in a timelier fashion with direct feedback to the Strategic MASH group.

Mental health services to create an internal pathway so that referrals can pass between the services rather than be declined. This has now been changed so that mental health referrals can be passed from provider to provider and not declined back to the referrer delaying the referral.

Police to consistently share relevant information with parents/ appropriate adults and partner agencies and ensure Community Resolution Orders (CRO) for children are signed by a parent/guardian or appropriate adult. More guidance is being given to officers regarding CROs for young people so that phone calls are made to parents/carers for example. Since this incident the CRO forms have also changed, and it has been made clearer that juveniles need an appropriate adult present as they can help the child better understand what the CRO is.

Making a difference: Quality Assurance Audits 2023/24

In 2023/24 the Quality Assurance Delivery Group led on the following multi-agency audits:

Domestic Abuse - May 2023, Neglect - July 2023, Child Exploitation - December 2023

Neglect - February 2023

Some of the themes from these audits and learning implemented:

Provision for Perpetrator programmes that are readily accessible for this client group. Ahimsa are the only people commissioned to provide perpetrator work in Plymouth and DA commissioning of new services is currently in the process.

Publicise our Partnership resolution policy so that it is clear across the partnership. Case resolution protocol has been shared and promoted throughout the partnership; however, no referrals were received in 2023/24

Complete a further multi agency early help and domestic abuse audit exercise to evidence progress made with the recommendations. This has been put onto the workplan for the Quality Assurance Delivery Group for 2024/25.

Increase in timeliness of sharing PPN's. Police have changed their processes to allow more timely sharing of PPN's which will mean more timely safeguarding measures for children.

Increased ability and confidence in recognising neglect and having curious conversations - consider workforce development and 'themed' conferences Professional curiosity is a cornerstone of the neglect strategy working group's guidance. This is also being addressed within the Police via specific neglect training, they have offered that Partners can also attend this training.

Review PSCP training programme on exploitation needs more detail on risks, what they are, how to report, what support is out there, and the roles of the team involved. This is being reviewed alongside development of strategy, practice guidance and toolkit.

Encompass style emails to inform agencies of A&E attendance/DIB intel. Children's Services are exploring options with Somerset for a system which would share this information, ultimately having more timely outcomes for children as all agencies would be appraised.

The Graded Care profile tool training to provide examples of how the tool can be used in a multi-agency way and prioritise the importance of relationship building with children, unannounced visits and observations of children's play and family interactions to understand their lived experience and the underlying issues that are causing the neglect. This will be explored by Workforce Development Group.



PARTNERSHIP DATA

The Partnership data scorecard is scrutinised through the Quality Assurance Delivery Group, the Practice Improvement Development Group and by the Young Safeguarders.

The data is resourced multi-agency, however the majority has come from Children's Services in the last year, due to a lack of Devon and Cornwall Police data following a change of computer system in November 2022. This data will be shared during the year 2024/25 after work to restore it by the Police.

A real gap in the partnership currently is a data analyst to analyse the data and help provide a more comprehensive dashboard going forward. This will be addressed in 2024 and work is currently being scoped to create a large, shared data platform across multiple partnerships in the city to allow a whole family approach to data analysis which will contribute to performance.

FUNDING THE PARTNERSHIP

The income for 2023/24 was:

Agency	Contribution
Plymouth City Council	£115,500
Devon and Cornwall Police	£26,583
NHS Devon Integrated Care Board	£19,614
Livewell South West	£19,614
University Hospitals NHS Trust	£7,909
City College Plymouth	£4,059
Probation	£2,000
Working Together 2023 Grant	£47,300
Total	£242,579

The expenditure for 2023/24 was:

Item	Cost
Business Unit Staffing	£178,665
Independent Scrutiny	£20,681
Training budget	£15,588
Conference and supplies	£6,558
Subscriptions	£2,939
Young Safeguarders	£1,500
Total	£225,931

At the end of 2023/2024 the partnership had reserves of £124,711 Reserves are needed to cover unforeseen expenditure such as learning reviews as well as being able to fulfil any legal requirements in the event of staff redundancies.

OUR PRIORITIES GOING FORWARD INTO 2024/2025

As a partnership we made the decision to keep the same priority areas for 2024/2025 as 2023/2024.

In the summer of 2024 the strategy, practice guidance and toolkits will launch on our website in each priority area to support practitioners in these spaces.

The task and finish groups in each area will become Operational Working groups which will deliver on the strategy and the learning from audit and review processes to ensure “closing the loop” and ultimately better outcomes for children, young people and families.



Auditing, data and reviews have shown us that we still have more work to do in our priority areas therefore, we will be working on these throughout 2024/2025.

We will also be creating an overarching strategy linking the cross-cutting themes of our priorities across the whole of the partnership in 2024/2025.

In 2024/2025 we will be improving our data dashboard to provide better analysis and performance monitoring as a partnership.

Cutting across all the priorities is a focus on organisational culture and professional support. We know that training, workshops, briefings and similar activities are helpful but fundamentally; good practice can only thrive where we have a culture of learning, respectful challenge and a partnership workforce that feels supported and valued.



INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY

Independent Scrutiny

I have worked with the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership for the last two years. My comments are based on working within the partnership, oversight of reviews and quality assurance meetings, attendance at meetings, conversations with leaders and staff, and the review of documents.

Leadership

In the two years I have worked with the partnership, I have seen much change. Leaders and managers have changed, and new initiatives have been introduced. The partnership has experienced leadership and management instability, but over the past twelve months this has improved. The arrival of the current Partnership Manager in June 2023 has improved continuity, consistency and planning for the partnership, as has the appointment of a permanent Director of Children Services at Plymouth City Council. The partnership is still waiting for permanent delegated safeguarding partners (DSPs) for both the Devon and Cornwall Police and the NHS Devon Integrated Care Board. It is understood that permanent appointments are due to be made, but until they are the leadership of the partnership at this level is not secure.

Relevant Agencies

The partnership is supported well by local 'Relevant Agencies'. Health, education, Probation, Voluntary and Community, and Community Safety organisations work effectively within the partnership. Organisations are committed, contribute resources, support new developments, engage with reviews and quality assurance, participate in learning and instigate new conversations. I feel this is a strength of the partnership.

I note the connections made with 'sport' representatives and it will be interesting to see how this develops. There are new opportunities to widen the partnership's influence into local sporting groups, and I recommend the partnership monitors this over the next year.

Participation

The 'Young Safeguarders' Group continues to be strength of the partnership and has contributed throughout the year. A new group of Safeguarders have been inducted. They and their predecessors have completed work for the partnership, providing a view from young people on topics including the use of police custody, children and adolescent mental health



services (CAMHS), and the effects of pornography. The value of these insights cannot be understated, and it is reassuring to observe partners respecting and acting upon the findings. I have suggested the partnership should have a wider perspective from children and families, to build on what the 'Young Safeguarders' provide. I am aware there are plans to develop this through each of the partnership's subgroups. I recommend this plan is monitored closely, as I feel, this is a risk to achieving what was intended in Working Together 2023, in respect of participation.

Learning

When I report on learning I mean both the learning the partnership provides to local staff, and the learning it gains through conducting reviews, and recognising what has been learned elsewhere.

In both respects I feel the partnership has performed well. The learning offer is based on a robust needs analysis and reflects the priorities of the partnership. The quality of inputs is high, they are valued by local practitioners and inputs are evaluated. The Workforce Development Group is flexible and has varied the learning offer to meet emerging needs of the partnership, e.g., the Building Support learning programme.

The partnership has developed its ability to learn from experience and has performed well. It has clear processes in place, local leaders understand what is required of them and work together to meet timescales. Thresholds are correctly applied; work is timely and completed thoroughly. Findings are clear, monitored and subject of regular oversight. There are good examples of reviews being conducted and acted upon.

Priorities

The partnership has made good progress on most of its priority areas over the past twelve months. Special mention must be made of the Partnership Manager, who created the vision, drove the activity and inspired others to follow her example. The partnership has enviable resources in respect of Neglect, Child Sexual Abuse, and Safeguarding Adolescents. I recognise the effort being made into child victims of domestic abuse and appreciate the same type of resources are close to being available. I note there are positive signs of improvement in these priority areas, but it is still early to truly understand how outcomes are being affected. I know work is planned to monitor the outcomes being achieved.

Early Help

Although the Early Help and Family Hubs activity does not sit under the Safeguarding Children Partnership, I feel it should be referenced. Early Help has developed across Plymouth, with a



clear focus on local communities. The ten Family Hubs/children centres have provided a focus for the activity and the local workforce has been enriched and empowered through additional learning opportunities. There is still much to do but plans are being developed to improve the connection between community and statutory resources, connect local partners and develop resilience within the communities.

Quality Assurance

Over the past year the quality assurance processes across the partnership have matured and these provide a mostly accurate, reliable and regular set of indicators into how well the partnership is performing. One significant gap throughout the past 12 months is the absence of police safeguarding information. Despite numerous promises this has not been provided and has left the partnership at a disadvantage. I recommend pressure continues to be placed on the leadership of the Devon and Cornwall Police to address this issue.

Multi-agency case auditing (MACA) has been strength of quality assurance, with one MACA being conducted during each quarter. This MACAs have focused on priorities and have been used wisely to assess progress in some areas, e.g., Neglect.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

The work before and after the publication of Working Together 2023 in December 2023 has been significant for the partnership, and particularly the Partnership Manager. Working Together 2023 has given the partnership an opportunity to develop child safeguarding. I feel the partnership has ensured it will meet the technical requirements, i.e., publishing the annual report and the new safeguarding arrangements. I have concerns that the partnership has not developed sufficiently in other areas, e.g., the involvement of Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs), the working together of DSPs, and creating plans to support the 'whole family'. I feel these are areas where the partnership needs to focus.

Conclusion

The Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership is in a much healthier situation than it was 12 months ago and has the potential to develop further. The key processes and structures are secure and there are plans for all its priorities. The partnership needs to monitor its plans to ensure progress continues. I feel particular attention needs to be placed on its leadership to ensure the LSPs and DSPs work together to optimise the opportunities available through Working Together 2023 and Early Help initiatives.

John Clements, Independent Scrutineer. August 2024



GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

There are multiple acronyms used by partners and throughout the partnership, below we have given a short explanation for some you may encounter throughout this report or when in contact with the partnership.

DIB - Daily Intelligence Briefing

MACE - Missing and Child Exploitation

ASF - Adolescent Safety Framework

CSA - Child Sexual Abuse

DASV - Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

PSCP - Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership

MASH - Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

DSP - Delegated Safeguarding Partner under Working Together 2023 Guidance

LSP - Lead Safeguarding Partner under Working Together 2023 Guidance

NSPCC - National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

ICB - Integrated Care Board

UHP - University Hospitals Plymouth

TFC - Together for Childhood

PATH - Plymouth Access to Housing

CCPT - Child Centred Policing Team

DSL - Designated Safeguarding Lead

EPS - Education, Participation and Skills

CSPR - Child Safeguarding Practice Review

RR - Rapid Review



CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

If You Are a Member of The Public

If you're worried about a child or young person, or think they're being abused, please speak with a professional that works with children at the earliest opportunity. If possible, speak to someone that works with the child/family you are worried about. If you can't do this or need any support, then please call **01752 668000** or email the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub at **MASH@plymouth.gov.uk** or outside of normal working hours call Plymouth Out of Hours Service on **01752 346984**.

If You Are a Professional

If you are worried about a child or young person then in the first instance, please read our guidance on the **Building Support** section of our website, to help you understand how to best support that child, young person or their family. Where the involvement of statutory services (Children's Social Care) might be appropriate, please complete a **MASH Contact Form** found on our website. If you have an urgent child protection concern, then please call Plymouth Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub on **01752 668000** (or **01752 346984** out of hours). You will be asked to follow up your call by submitting a MASH Contact form the same day.

MASH Consultation Line for Professionals

If you are a professional you can call the MASH Consultation Line for Professionals where you can call for advice and guidance around those situations where you're unclear or unsure about the appropriate support, or if a referral into children's social care is needed.

You can speak to the MASH Consultation Line about a range of hypothetical issues or concerns.

To speak about a specific child, you should have consent from the parents or carers providing it is safe to do so. The only time this isn't applicable is when seeking consent might place a child at risk of further harm.



The number to call is **01752 304339** and is open **9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays)** and will not be available during hours that are covered by the Out of Hours Team.

The consultation line does not replace the right of partner agencies to make a referral directly into Children's Social Care when the concerns may constitute significant harm.

Online Professional Enquiry Form

If you want to speak to the allocated social worker for a child already receiving children's social care support, and it's not an urgent safeguarding concern, you can request a call back by completing the online Professionals Enquiry Form on our website.

Find out more:

<https://plymouthscb.co.uk/making-a-referral/>

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Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	Early Help
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture, Events and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director of Children's Services)
Author:	Martine Aquilina
Contact Email:	Martine.aquilina@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an informative update regarding the Early Help System and how we work together to ensure children and families are receiving the right support by the right person.

Recommendations and Reasons

For the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel to note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Not applicable for this report.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

This report directly links to The Plymouth Plan 2014-2034 'to create the conditions where children, young people and families can thrive, assisting them to build resilience through the early development of good physical and emotional health and by equipping young people and parents with the skills to improve their wellbeing'.

A Bright Future 2021-2026 states that 'As partners, we want to make sure all children and young people in Plymouth have a Bright Future, supported by a system which works seamlessly to spot difficulties early, responds quickly and effectively, and makes sure that help is there for as long as it is needed' and makes a commitment that 'We are strengths based: Early Help will be embedded across the system'. As part of this Plan the 'Early Help Strategic Board was established to drive partnership working on how we transform early help and targeted services for vulnerable children' and has subsequently agreed an Early Help Strategy.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Information only

Financial Risks

N/A

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

N/A

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							
B								

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Temilola Salimon

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 30/09/2024

Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications),

Date approved: 01/10/2024

I. Introduction

At the request of the Scrutiny Panel, this briefing report has been prepared to offer an informative update regarding the Early Help System and how we work together to ensure children and families are receiving the right support by the right person.

In 2021 the multi-agency vision for Plymouth, 'A Bright Future 2021 – 2026', was published, outlining how local partners planned to support the best outcomes for all children.

A Bright Future vision focused upon three areas, to stay happy and healthy, to be safe and to aspire and achieve.

Within the vision was the clear intention to help children and families at the earliest sign of need, and to provide support, ranging from advice through to specialist intervention. This commitment has been formalised into one of the 10 priorities outlined in the One Children's Service 3-Year Plan, to develop 'a strong and effective early help offer which reaches children, young people and families who need it when they need it and improves outcomes and destinations for all children and young people and families.'

The delivery of Early Help, is a fundamental project in the One Children's Service Programme, and it aims to, in collaboration with all key city partners, build on the existing Early Help offer and delivery of Family Hubs to develop a network of services, processes and interactions that are able to understand, predict the need and respond together to help children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity.

2. Family Hubs in Plymouth

In 2022 Plymouth was successful in being one of the 75 local authority areas in England to receive a share of the Government's Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme funding for 2022 – 2025.

To ensure the efforts undertaken in Plymouth were complementary, the 'Family Hub and Start for Life' work and the Early Help Innovative Partnership unified as the Plymouth Early Help and Family Hub Partnership Executive. The partners and representatives from Plymouth City Council Children's Services, started working together to build on best practice, local offers of family help and engage those key stakeholders to design and deliver the city programme.

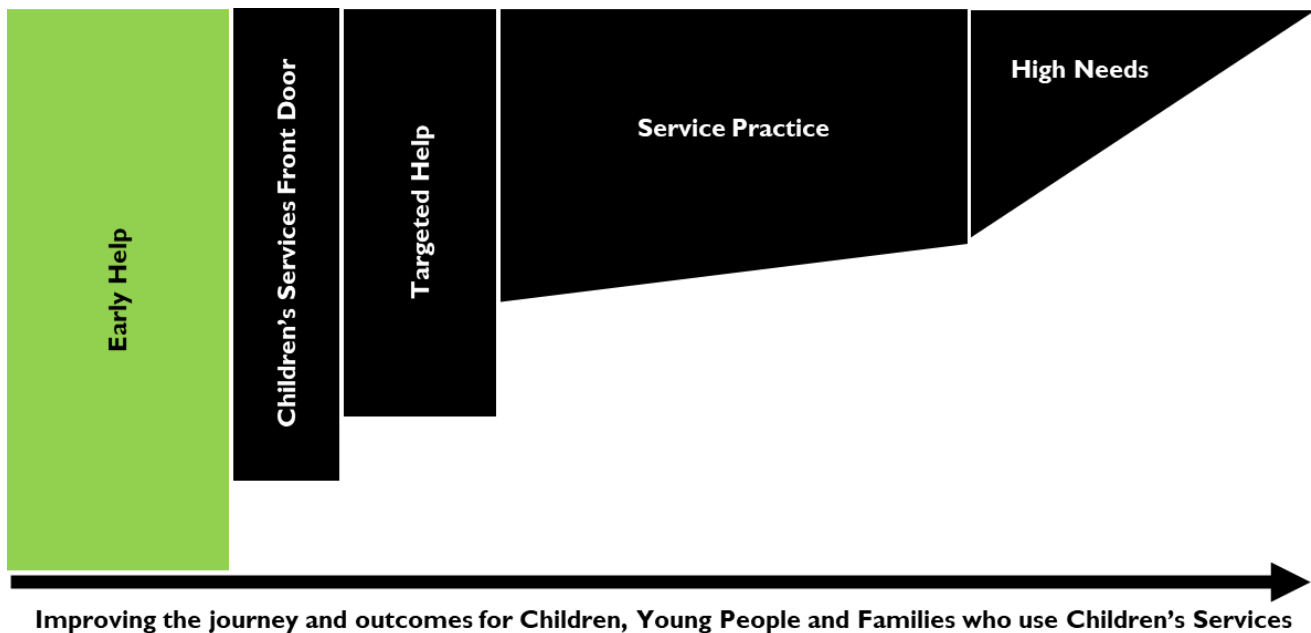
Since the awarding of the funding -

- Plymouth Family Hubs have launched 9 Family hubs, we have 1 Family Hub to follow, and additional venues have requested to become an outreach site or partner Family hub site
- Plymouth Family Hub network has grown to over 120 different organisations to help support Children, Young People and families to get the help they need, when they need it from a place they can access.
- Plymouth Family hubs have membership from 18330 families
- In 2024 (January to August) Plymouth Family Hubs have supported 826 Families.
- In 2024 the percentage of families supported at level 3 and above was 59% (Open to a social worker)
- Family Hubs have staff trained in a variety of courses such as GCP2, IAPT, Outcome Stars, VIG and PEEP
- Family Hubs have staff at Derriford Hospital supporting families within the NICU ward
- Family Hubs have staff in MASH supporting PCC Front Door

3. Proposal (A Future Model for Early Help)

Our future model for Early Help aims to create a network of Early Help that sits at the forefront of our operating model (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Operating Model for Children and Families going from Early Help into Children's Services



This model will enable us to create simple solutions that connect our Early Help network with the Front Door and then into our Targeted Help Services. Showing a complete join-up of prevention and initial services to improve our abilities to provide the right support to children, young people and families at the right time and in the right place.

4. Plymouth's Vision for Early Help

Plymouth's vision for early help is to ensure that every child and their family can access and receive timely, effective support from trusted sources. We aim to build supportive trusted relationships around families and communities, addressing diversity and equity to provide equal life chances for all children. Our aim is to create a city-wide system of early help, that will improve prevention and provide self-help support options for families, children and young people from 0 – 25 years.

We will do this by building any future change using the agreed strategic principles.

Universal and Specialist Services Integration (Integrated community-based teams)

- Work with both universal services and specialist services to create a cohesive support network that enable children and their families to be able to get the support they need from the right professional easily and without delay.

No Wrong Door Approach

- Develop a system where families can access support through multiple entry points where they will receive consistent advice and guidance and the support they need.

Building Support through Multi-Agency Collaboration

- Enhance collaboration among local agencies, including health, education, housing, and employment services and voluntary and community organisations to ensure we build a support network around families when they need it.

Family Hubs Network

- Utilise the Family Hub Network to provide comprehensive support from pre-birth to 25 years (for those with SEND) and co-locate multi-agency teams, including midwives, health visitors, early years settings, schools, and other relevant services.

Trauma-Informed Practices

- Embed trauma-informed approaches across all children's and adult services to understand and use trauma-informed lenses to understand and address the complexities of children's and families' lived experiences.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

- Focus on local assets and strengths to foster sustainable community development and promote the involvement of community members in developing solutions and support systems.

5. Targeted Help Services and an Integrated Front Door

As part of One Children's Service 3-year plan and the introduction of the new Working Together 2023 and the Social Work reform, we have started to review and realign the Targeted Help services to enable them to support children and families referred into Children, Young People and Families Service.

Targeted Help Teams have been realigned into 3 x Teams, 2 of which are managed by Qualified Social Workers in line with Working Together 2023 and are now supporting families directly from the front door, providing a more intensive level of support to families where further assessment from a social worker is not needed.

We have agreed pathways in place to provide a seamless approach to children who need to step down or step up to / from statutory services.

We are working closely with partners to strengthen the Integrated Front Door Model ensuring that we have specialist workers within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub who can support with identifying the right support to families when they need it.

Conclusion

The Family Hubs hosted the first Strengthening Families and Communities Market Place on the 1st of October 2024 in the YMCA. We had 83 different agencies showcasing the work they do and the service they offer to children and families in the city and over 250 people at the event networking, sharing information and building relationships.

The event also enabled us to consult on how we progress plans to develop Integrated Community Based teams, using places and spaces already hosting our partners to develop and grow community-based services where our children and families need us most.

We will continue to work with our partners to provide services in the community that are child and family focused, where need is considered and responded to at the earliest opportunity, by the most appropriate worker and that we ensure that these services are sustainable into the future.

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	Youth Justice Service
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture, Events and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director of Children's Services)
Author:	Martine Aquilina
Contact Email:	martine.aquilina@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Scrutiny Board to enable them to scrutinise and provide challenge to the Youth Justice Service.

Recommendations and Reasons

For the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel to note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Not applicable

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

This report directly links to The Plymouth Plan 2014-2034 'to create the conditions where children, young people and families can thrive, assisting them to build resilience through the early development of good physical and emotional health and by equipping young people and parents with the skills to improve their wellbeing'.

A Bright Future 2021-2026 states that 'As partners, we want to make sure all children and young people in Plymouth have a Bright Future, supported by a system which works seamlessly to spot difficulties early, responds quickly and effectively, and makes sure that help is there for as long as it is needed'.

The Youth Justice Plan 2025 vision is to 'To develop a youth justice system in Plymouth that sees children as children, treats them fairly and helps them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society. Diverting Children early will prevent offending and create safer communities with fewer victims in the city.'

Implications for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

There is no financial implication

Financial Risks

N/A

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

N/A

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

N/A

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Temilola Salimon											

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 30/09/2024

Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)

Date approved: 01/10/2024

1. Executive Summary

This briefing is to inform members of the council of the role of the Youth Justice Service and the current position in Plymouth relating to children in the Youth Justice system.

2. Background information

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act introduces the principal aim for youth justice as being the prevention of offending and established multi-agency youth offending teams and a range of court orders specifically for children. The Act states the Chief Executive of each local authority is responsible for the establishment of a local Youth Justice Management Board which must contain representatives of the Police, the Probation Service, Social Services, and the Health Service who also fund the service. As a minimum, the Youth Justice Service must contain one representative from each of these services. Whilst subsequent legislation has been imposed since 1998, setting out further sentencing options for children, the principles of the Crime and Disorder Act remain which state the aim of the Youth Justice System to prevent offending by children and young persons. Until 2020, Youth Justice Services were only funded to work with children who receive a Youth Conditional Caution or a Court Order. We now receive additional funding to prevent children from entering the system by diverting children at the earliest opportunity.

Evidence shows, once a child enters the system, their prospects and aspirations are greatly impacted. In 2011, the Centre for Justice Innovation estimated the average cost of a child entering the criminal justice system cost £3,620 in the first year rising to £22,995 over the following 9 years. Whilst this research has not been updated since 2011, one can imagine this sum has increased dramatically since then. Therefore, diversion is the best option for the child as well as society in general.

3. Plymouth Youth Justice Service

The Crime and Disorder Act states the minimum structure of each team. In Plymouth, we receive an annual budget of £1,046,448 pounds made up from the statutory partners set out above as well as the Youth Justice Board and provides services to prevent children offending and entering the Youth Justice system.

We have 3 teams within the service,

- The first team undertakes most of the work with children on statutory interventions including Police Cautions, Court Orders and children in custody.
- The second team undertakes our very successful prevention and diversion work to prevent children entering the criminal justice system.
- The third team is made up of specialist works including 2 CAMHs workers, a Psychologist, a Police Officer, a Probation Officer, a Speech and Language worker and a Substance use worker.

In total the team consists of 4 managers, 14 Youth Justice workers and a victim worker (who provides support to victims of crime), and 7 specialist workers seconded to the team.

4. Current offer

Currently, the team are working with 105 children, made up 54 children on statutory interventions (court orders) and 51 children working with the service voluntarily on non-statutory, diversionary interventions. This is the highest percentage of statutory cases we have had for 3 years. Of the children we are working with, 51 are for violent offences and we are seeing a spike in violence from

female children, up by 20% when compared with pre-pandemic levels. The recent protest has resulted in 7 children being convicted and sentenced, 4 are on intensive orders (these include curfews and 35 hours of contact arranged by the service per week) and this has increased the pressure on the service as a result.

All children receive a comprehensive assessment to assess their needs as well as the risk of reoffending and any risk of harm to members of the public or themselves. The level of intervention required is determined by the risk assessment and the 'scaled approach' principle, meaning children with the greatest risk of reoffending and harm will require the greatest intervention.

Our data shows we perform exceptionally well in terms of children's re-offending rates which are currently 14% in Plymouth compared to the England average of 32.6%. We only have one child in custody and 96% of our children live in suitable accommodation. We have also been praised to our approach to disproportionality when dealing with children who class themselves as any ethnicity other than White British. 18 months ago, 13.2% of our caseload was made up of children who do not class themselves as White British, (the school roll in Plymouth showed 9.8% of children class themselves as non-White British), we have reduced this to 6% by working closely with the Child Centred Policing Team, voluntary agencies and schools. Equally, we see a high percentage of children open to the team who are Children in Care, and we have worked hard with partners, placement providers and Children's Social Care to reduce this level from 51%, 12 months ago, to 34% today.

The Youth Justice Board undertakes quarterly assessments of Youth Justice Services in England and Wales using our current data as well as attendance at board meetings and monthly one to one meeting with the Youth Justice Service Manager. Plymouth is currently assessed in the top quadrant of Youth Justice Service in the country and one of only services to achieve this in the Southwest.

5. Challenges and capacity

Plymouth Youth Justice Service was last inspected 3 years ago and was graded as good. We are now in scope to be inspected again and have an aspiration to build on this and be graded as outstanding. To do this, we must improve on 3 aspects of our performance.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation have recently altered the inspection criteria for Youth Justice Services with the focus on meeting the aspirations of children to achieve their life goals. Currently, 33% of our children do not meet their aspirations in terms of education, training and support. Plymouth recently completed a peer review of the new inspection criteria with Derby and Southampton Youth Justice Services and performed well in all areas except for education and training and it is assumed the inspectors will form the same view. Both Derby and Southampton have Education workers within their teams to address this given the high number of children in the Youth Justice system with Special Educational Needs. We will be working closely with our Education, Participation and Skills colleagues to work together to improve the outcomes for our children and young people.

The second challenge we currently face is in terms of the number of First Time Entrants (FTE) we are seeing, which is almost double in terms of children receiving statutory interventions.

This year, the Youth Justice Board have changed their counting rules for FTE where previously, it was based on Police data, they now use Youth Justice data, as a result, driving offences which result in a fine are counted. We are also seeing an increase in the number of children given Youth Conditional Cautions since the new Police gravity matrix was introduced, the other 3 Youth Justice Services in Devon and Cornwall are reporting similar figures, and we are working with the Police and Crime Commissioner to seek a resolution to how Devon and Cornwall Police are interpreting the matrix in comparison to other Police Services in the South West.

As previously stated, we have seen a 20% increase in violent attacks committed by female children, the Police are reporting a 35% increase of violence committed by female children over the same period which has also impacted on our FTE rate. The behaviours we are seeing are concerning and similar to

the behaviour of boys we first saw in 2020 who were being exploited by County Lines gangs, for example planned attacks that are recorded and posted on the internet, often on strangers.

Whilst the girls are not disclosing anything that would suggest they are being exploited, we continue to be curious. To address these concerns, we have received funding from the Safer Executive to work with Plymouth Argyle who have been commissioned to go into 3 of the schools where this behaviour is most prevalent to work with girls to understand the reasons for this behaviour and offer alternatives.

In addition, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner have commissioned Make Amends, a restorative justice charity, to work with individual girls who have committed violent crimes and their victims to address this behaviour. Plymouth is at the forefront of this work nationally as there are no current, accredited programmes to work with girls who display violent behaviours. This pattern has been noted across the Southwest and we will now be reporting data to the YJ Board.

Finally, as previously stated, our Diversion and Prevention work has been recognised nationally as a good practice model and our results have exceeded all expectation. Previously, the Ministry of Justice funded the non-statutory, diversionary work undertaken in the city with a grant of £110,053 per annum. This funding ended in September and the new government have given no indication this funding will be replaced. As a result, we have had to restructure the service with 3 Youth Justice workers and one manager leaving the service. The Plymouth Youth Justice Management Board have given a commitment that our prevention and diversion should continue, however, this restructure will limit the number of children we can work with.

Knife Crime update – Nationally, we have seen an increase in young people carrying and using knives within communities resulting in tragic incidents. In 2023, we saw a rise in children reporting carrying knives so in June 2023 the Youth Justice Manager and Superintendent Scott Bradley (now acting Chief Superintendent) worked together to understand the problem and discovered that whilst well below national indicators, there was an increase in reporting the use of knives. To address these concerns the police undertook an exercise where those children identified as carrying knives were disrupted. Plymouth Argyle Trust were then commissioned to work in secondary schools to raise awareness of carrying knives. Those individual children that were found to be in possession of bladed articles were provided with support and intervention to address the risk. This is consistently monitored, and Plymouth remains below national indicators.

6. Conclusion

Plymouth Youth Justice Service is recognised locally and nationally as an innovative and high-performing service. As a result of our performance, the Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board recently visited Plymouth to look at our Child First approach, especially considering the praise the service received when dealing with the 40 children identified as attending the protest in the city. Whilst children received appropriate, intensive orders for their behaviours, our child first approach ensured all remained in the community.

After her visit in August, the CEO of the Youth Justice Board, Steph Bibby Roberts commented,

The leadership of the service and staff ensures they are clearly led by children's needs, with a strong commitment to Child First principles.

Education and Children's Social Care OSC

Work Programme 2024/25



Please note that the work programme is a 'live' document and subject to change at short notice. The information in this work programme is intended to be of strategic relevance.

For general enquiries relating to the Council's Scrutiny function, including this Committee's work programme, please contact Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Advisor) on 01752 305155.

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member /Officer
18 July	Child Exploitation	4	Scrutiny request to have a report yearly and to review current and changing themes in the City.	Martine Aquilina
	Performance Scorecard	4	KPI's for the performance of Children's Social Care and Education, Participation and Skills Services.	Paul Stephens
	SEND Sufficiency Commission Strategy	5	To review the proposed strategy for the City.	Amanda Paddison
	Childrens Services Improvement and transformation plan	5	To review Children's services improvement and transformation plan. This item would see young people involvement and to hear their views on the plan.	Vivien Lines
	Education, Employment and Training Review	4	To include Care experienced children and care leavers.	Tina Brinkworth
10 October	Elective Home Education in Plymouth	20 mins	Report on the numbers of children and young people being increasingly electively home educated. To include reasons and what the Local Authority was doing to ensure children and young people were receiving a good education.	Isabelle Morgan
	Family Homes for Plymouth Children	20 mins	To understand the programme and how the authority was trying to increase family homes for Plymouth's children.	Temilola Salimon
	Inclusive practice to address exclusions and suspensions in Plymouth	1 hr	MATS to be invited. Youth Parliament (Jenny Way) to be invited and seek children and young people's views.	Lisa Linscott

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member /Officer
	Plymouth Safeguarding Childrens Board Annual Report	20 mins	Scrutiny to have an update from the Safeguarding Children's Board.	Siobhan Logue
	Early Help Strategy	25 mins	To include information on Family Hubs.	Martine Aquilina
	Children in the criminal justice system	20 mins	How are Children's services engaging with children in the criminal justice system.	Ian Taylor
	CYPFS Transformation QI		For Scrutiny to evaluate the progress of the improvement plans.	Vivien Lines
14 November	Attainment		To include data on the cared for children cohort.	Lisa Linscott / Jim Barnicott
	Attendance Strategy		Key component of improvement work	Isabelle Morgan/Lisa/Jim
	Alternative Provision Strategy		This would include information on exclusions and suspensions in the city.	Lisa Linscott
	Children Missing Full Time Education		To understand what the Council was doing to ensure that those children and young people missing full time education were receiving good support.	Isabelle Morgan
	Education Mobility Issues		For the Panel to scrutinise the high levels of mobility issues within the city.	Jim Barnicott
	Child Exploitation		Join up with the Police for this report and to include information such as the Philomena Protocol	
6 February	CYPF Transformation Q2 Review		For Scrutiny to review the transformation plan for CYPFS.	Vivien Lines

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Priority Score	Reason for Consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member /Officer
Items Raised by the Committee to be scheduled for 2024/25				
2024/25	Cost of Living for Education	(4)	Identified for consideration by the Committee at its July 2023 meeting.	Councillor Sally Cresswell
	Transitions to adulthood	(4)	Key component of improvement work	
	Youth Justice Annual Report			Ian Taylor
	Traveller Community	(3)		
	Toileting in schools	(3)	Young Safeguarders	
	Projection of school numbers and capacity			
Issues Identified for Select Committee Reviews				
	Emotional Health and Wellbeing of children		Inclusion/Persistent absence/Child death/SEND/EHCP's/Toileting/temp accommodation	

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Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Tracking Decisions 2024/25

	Resolution	Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress
13)	A report would be produced to advise members of the numbers of children that were entitled to free schools meals but were electively home educated or were permanently excluded. How was this spread across the city.	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress: The service was actively Working with CAPITA to be able to access this data as there is no report for this that can be automated.</p> <p>Officer: Isabelle Morgan</p>
14)	Members would be provided the action plan that delivered the Attendance Strategy.	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress:</p> <p>Officer: Jim Barnicott</p>
15)	Education officers would arrange through the Participation team analysis into issues of attendance and bullying of children and young people within the LGBTQ+ community.	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress:</p> <p>Officer: Jim Barnicott/Stuart Hogg</p>
16)	Officers to revisit the attendance campaign work and spread wider	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress: Met with Newham Council to discuss their attendance campaign, in the process of working with PCC comms team to look at Plymouth campaign and share the learning from previous campaign with headteachers.</p> <p>Officer: Isabelle Morgan</p>
17)	EHCP and CAMHS waiting times would be provided to Councillor McLay.	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress:</p> <p>Officer: Lisa McDonald</p>
18)	Councillors would be provided the policy on Free School Meals and Bus Pass entitlements.	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress:</p>

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Tracking Decisions 2024/25

		Officer: Amanda Paddison
19)	All councillors would be invited to a briefing session on Child Exploitation and County Lines.	Date: November 2024 Progress: Dates will be identified before the close of the year for all councillors to attend a briefing with the Youth Justice Service. Officer: Martine Aquilina

The following relates to exempt or confidential matters (Para(s) 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Govt Act 1972). Any breach of confidentiality could prejudice the Council/person/body concerned & might amount to a breach of the councillors /employees codes of conduct.

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